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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT OF OUTSIDERS ON THE COMMUNITY OF FORT CHIPEWYAN, ALBERTA

by

© PAMELA ANN MATHEWSON

A THESIS

SUPMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1974

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled . . . . . THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT OF OUTSIDERS ON THE . . . . . COMMUNITY OF FORT CHIPEWYAN, ALBERTA . . . . . submitted by . . . . . PAMELA ANN MATHEWSON . . . . . in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

William C. Wonders
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to try to determine the impact through time of agents of the external culture, on the natives of Fort Chipewyan and the surrounding area. This is done by examining the various types of outsiders - fur traders, missionaries and government officials - and assessing the changes in the native way of life which have resulted, or been accelerated by contact with the outsiders.

Both the processes of contact and the patterns resulting from these processes are central to the study. Specific emphasis is on changes in native economic activity, land use, and settlement patterns.

Agents of the outside culture are found to have accelerated population movements, and prompted changes in native activities. On a large scale, convergence on Fort Chipewyan through the 19th and 20th centuries is evident in terms of trapping grounds and place of residence.

The situation in the settlement at present is examined, with emphasis on the economic activities of the natives, the changing employment opportunities, and the role which outsiders play in the settlement. On the basis of the trends perceived from the past patterns of activity and present processes, an attempt is made to predict future developments in the settlement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr. W.C. Wonders, for his valuable counsel. Consultation and advice were provided by many individuals, including Father Mou[illegible]au, Sister Sarazin and the Wood Buffalo National Park officials. Plates 1 and 4, and figures 14 and 16 are reproduced here by the courtesy of Dr. W.C. Wonders, and J. Parker, who own the originals. My thanks go to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company in London for their kind permission to use the microfilm records at the Public Archives in Ottawa. I am most grateful to the J.S. Ewart Foundation for assistance with thesis production expenses. Finally, I express my heartfelt thanks to Ian Wight who helped encourage and cheer me when the going looked bleak, and for many other things besides.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Objectives	1
Methodology	2
Literature Review	3
CHAPTER II. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING	8
Location and Site	8
Geology and Geomorphology	10
Climate	14
Vegetation	15
Wildlife	16
Waterfowl	17
Fish	18
Native Population Distribution	18
CHAPTER III. FUR TRADE	23
Company Competition	28
Trade Monopoly	33
Freetraders	45
CHAPTER IV. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY	51
Early Missionary Contact	51
Native Attitudes to the Missionary	52
Spatial Changes resulting directly from Missionary Contact	54
Native Health, Education and Welfare	56
CHAPTER V. GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT	61
Native Administration	61
Treaty Number 8, 1899	61
Spatial Implications of the Treaty	64

PAGE

Increasing Contact with Outsiders 64

Spatial Implications of Health and Education Developments 66

Money Economy Introduced: Increased Contact with New Life-Style 69

CHAPTER VI. PHYSICAL EVOLUTION OF THE SETTLEMENT 73

The First Trading Posts 73

Nineteenth Century: Slow Growth 78

Twentieth Century: Accelerating Growth 84

CHAPTER VII. TRAPPING 99

Instability of the Trapping Industry 99

Native Concern about Trapping Conditions 101

Large-Scale Spatial Processes and Convergence on the Delta Area 105

Group versus Individual Trapping Areas 107

Specific Population Movements between Trapping Areas . . 107

Impact of the Bennett Dam 114

CHAPTER VIII. OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES 118

Fishing 118

Lumbering 121

Mining 123

Transportation 124

Local Business and Services 128

CHAPTER IX. THE COMMUNITY AT PRESENT 132

Population Characteristics 132

Employment 136

Education 138

Adult training and Upgrading 141

Settlement Facilities 142

PAGE

CHAPTER X. PRESENT ROLES OF GOVERNMENT 147

Government Employment 147

Public Support 149

Community Development 151

Co-operatives 152

Mobility and Migration 153

Transiency 154

Local Participation 156

Communication and Co-ordination 157

CHAPTER XI. FUTURE 159

Short term Employment 159

Medium term Employment 163

Long term Employment 165

CHAPTER XII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 172

BIBLIOGRAPHY 177

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
3-1	Indian Visits to Peter Pond's Fort, 1786	27
3-2	Sickness and Disease at Fort Chipewyan	42
7-1	Census of Muskrat Houses on the Peace-Athabasca Delta	115
8-1	Numbers and Place of Residence of Sweetgrass Landing Non-Supervisory Employees of Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd.	122
8-2	Income Earned by the Employees of Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd., 1967-70	122
8-3	Passengers and Freight handled at Fort Chipewyan Airport, 1966-1973	126
8-4	Estimated Employment and Income Generated by Fort Chipewyan Services and Business. 1970-71	130
9-1	Total Population Change by Sub region, 1941-1971	133
9-2	Potential Labour Force, 1961-1971	137
9-3	Actual Labour Force as a Proportion of Population	137
9-4	Labour Force by Class or Worker, Wage Earner by Earnings	137
10-1	Federal and Provincial Government Employment, 1970	148
10-2	Total Social Assistance to Fort Chipewyan Area Residents, 1966-67 to 1970-71	150
10-3	Initial intended length of Residence at Fort Chipewyan	155
10-4	Length of Residence at Fort Chipewyan at time of Survey	155
10-5	Subsequent intended Length of Residence in Fort Chipewyan	155
10-6	Altered Residency Intentions since arrival at Fort Chipewyan	155
11-1	Employment Potential of Short and Medium-Term developments at Fort Chipewyan	166

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Location map	9
2.	Geology and Geomorphology, Fort Chipewyan Area	11
3.	Peace-Athabasca Delta	13
4.	Indian Distribution, 1700's and 1900's	20
5.	Fur Traders Post, 1778-1870	24
6.	Proposed Partition of the Fur Trade Districts, 1811	29
7.	Indian Rendezvous Areas in 1800's	36
8.	Movements of Indians Resorting to Fort Chipewyan	38
9.	Total Population and Ethnic Subdivisions, 1778-1900	41
10.	Boundaries of Treaty No. 8	63
11.	Western Lake Athabasca, compiled from Peter Fidler's Sketches	75
12.	Location of Trading Posts, Western Lake Athabasca	76
13.	Plan of Fort Chipewyan Post, 1823	79
14.	Roman Catholic Mission Buildings, 1891	81
15.	Sketch of Fort Chipewyan, 1893	83
16.	Plan of Fort Chipewyan Post, 1889	84
17.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement Plan, 1913	85
18.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement Plan, 1924	87
19.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement Plan, 1946	90
20.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement Plan, 1956	92
21.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement Plan, 1971	93
22.	Estimated Income from Trapping in Fort Chipewyan, 1960-61 to 1969-70	103
23.	Number of Fort Chipewyan Trappers	104
24.	Distribution of Fort Chipewyan Trappers, 1973	106
25.	Trappers Cabins.. Changes in the Decade 1964-1973	108

Figure		Page
26.	Muskrat Catches, Group and Individual Trapping areas, 1950-51 to 1955-56	109
27.	Movements of Individual Trappers to and from Fort Chipewyan	111
28.	Origin of Movements to and from Fort Chipewyan	112
29.	Water Transportation Tonnages handled at Fort Chipewyan	125
30	Road Routes Existing and Proposed	129
31.	Total Population in Fort Chipewyan and Ethnic Subdivisions, 1930-1972	134
32.	Fort Chipewyan Population Pyramids, 1961, 1966, 1971	135
33.	Major Income Producing and Employment Categories, 1965-70	139
34.	Fort Chipewyan Settlement, Layout and Facilities, 1970	143

LIST OF PLATES

Plate	Description	Page
1	Hudson's Bay Company buildings, 1959	89
2	Government-built Native houses, 1973	89
3	Government employees' houses, 1973	95
4	Air View of Fort Chipewyan, 1959	95
5	Fishing Camp at Bustard Island, 1973	120
6	Horse-drawn water deliveries , 1973	120

ABBREVIATIONS

P.A.D.P.	Peace-Athabasca Delta Project
A.V.M.	Archives of the Vicariat of Mackenzie
A.A.	Anglican Archives
M.D.R.P.	Mackenzie Delta Research Project
N.S.R.G.	Northern Science Research Group
D.N.A.N.R.	Department Northern Affairs and Natural Resources
P.A.C.	Public Archives of Canada
G.C.O.S.	Great Canadian Oil Sands
D.I.A.N.D.	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
C.W.S.	Canadian Wildlife Service

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

Almost two decades ago Stone stated that

> "Historical geographic research on population distributions is desirable to supplement current investigations. Where, for example, did the Indian ... live in the past in northern North America? What are the relations of these locations to the present distributions and why the changes if any?"[1]

He complained that the changing population distributions have been little studied in northern North America. In the present study concern will be focused on the spatial aspects of population distributions in the Fort Chipewyan area, and temporal variations in distribution.

However, it is not enough to focus on the spatial patterns and morphometric descriptions per se, since "process affects spatial form which may in turn affect process."[2] Bunge, in analysing spatial relations in geography, has correctly perceived two components, spatial structure and process, the former resulting from the latter.[3] Thus in order to understand and explain the spatial patterns, or structures, the processes must also be analysed. In considering spatial structures, the concern is 'geometrical,' and the thesis will attempt to analyse native population movements, residency patterns, and Fort Chipewyan settlement morphology.

Similarly the processes resulting in spatial structures will be investigated, one of the most important being movement, since " ... any explanation of how an object came to be created where it is found on the surface of the earth involves the concept of movement."[4] On a large scale, the processes causing spatial changes in population distribution will be examined in relation to place of permanent residence and within time periods

of a year. At a smaller scale the movements of hunting and trapping grounds of an individual will be investigated.

By studying spatial interactions, it is intended to show that the settlement has evolved through the influence of contact of a series of agents of the external culture upon the socio-economic activities, and so the movements of the natives. Additionally, it is hoped to show that the spatial structure itself has affected spatial process, the natives' economic activities and movements. Outsiders will be studied at the local level and the institutional level, with regard to objectives and policy in the settlement and region.

It is hypothesised: a) that agents of culture contact have accelerated population movements and thus prompted native economic activity and land use changes, and b) that native hunting and trapping grounds will shift in time, closer to the settlement both on a large scale and individual basis.

Methodology

Many previous studies of northern communities have been weak in their methodological framework,[5] with an approach from a single point of view. Firey maintained that there are three distinct approaches to resource use, ecological, ethnological and economic, but that "... no one of these approaches can by itself, provide an adequate rational for what resource planners are doing or are able to do."[6] The approach of the present study is essentially similar to that taken by Wolforth.[7] It incorporates an historical analysis of the cultural ecology of the Fort Chipewyan area, the economic activities of the natives, and the processes which generate spatial changes in the area. The current status and future prospects of the community are also investigated.

Concern in the thesis is with the human ecological interrelationships

between natives, the territory they occupy, and the way in which they have used resources. However, focus is not solely on the relationships between man and land, a traditional method of enquiry, but rather on the spatial ramifications of the resource utilization pattern, and the influence of external cultures in changing the arrangement of communities in space. This type of methodology can be traced back to the human ecology tradition originating at the University of Chicago in the 1920's. The School

> " ... had as a major objective 'to discover the principles and factors involved in the changing patterns of spatial arrangement of population and in situations resulting from the interplay of living beings in a continuously changing culture.' (McKenzie, 1931)"[8]

The study was based on research conducted from June to October, 1973. Information was gathered in the settlement by conversation and questionnaires, only limited aspects of which were used in the thesis. However, the content was useful in assessing the present situation in the settlement.

Of necessity, much time was spent in library research. Major sources include the Hudson's Bay Company Archives,[9] Ottawa; Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa; National Library, Ottawa; Church Mission Society records, Ottawa; Anglican Archives, Edmonton; Archives of the Vicariat of Mackenzie, Fort Smith; Department of Lands and Forests, Edmonton, Fort Smith and Yellowknife; and government files and books, Edmonton, Yellowknife and Ottawa.

Literature Review

Before 1970, little material had been published specifically about Fort Chipewyan. One work edited by Chalmers[10] does deal solely with the settlement, but the papers were intended for radio presentation and are of limited value for detailed academic research.

Information on the physical background of the area is relatively rich.[11] Ecological studies of the area are mainly concentrated on Wood

Buffalo National Park,[12] but Fuller[13] conducted a detailed study of the muskrat of the Peace-Athabasca Delta and Novakowski[14] studied all the fur bearers of the area.

Comprehensive studies have been done on the Indians of North America, including sections on the Athapascans, but of necessity, there is not much local detail in them.[15] Jenness published a major work showing the relationship of the various Indian tribes, and edited a more detailed account of the Chipewyan Indians.[16] Osgood and Birket-Smith also give useful information on the territorial occupance of the Chipewyans.[17] Additional sources are found in the journals of the explorers of the 18th and 19th centuries.[18]

Information on the fur trade in Canada is well documented.[19] More specific reference is made to Fort Chipewyan and the Athabasca area by MacGregor, Rich and Blanchet.[20] Parker's[21] thesis about Fort Chipewyan and the fur trade is historical, but gives detailed information on all aspects of life at the fort. The basic source of reference for fur trade material is, of course, the H. B. C. Archives in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

There is no comprehensive study of the church in northern Canada, since Roman Catholic and Protestant writers have dealt solely with the activities of their own church. Fortunately the earlier Roman Catholic missionaries in the Athabasca area all wrote of their experience in Fort Chipewyan. Duchaussois and Ortolan give information on Fort Chipewyan in their treatment of northern Canada.[22] Boon and Archer give general background on the work of Protestant missionaries in the North.[23] Archival material related to missionary activity is found in the Anglican Archives, Diocese of Edmonton, Provincial Museum and Archives; The Church Mission Society, Public Archives of Canada; and the Archives of the Vicariat of

Mackenzie, Fort Smith.

No study investigates the impact of government activities on the northern natives, but Zaslow[24] provides a wealth of useful material. Information on earlier jurisdiction is found in Oliver and the D.I.A.N.D. historic files.[25]

Since 1970, much valuable information on the effect of low water in the Peace-Athabasca Delta has become available, largely through the publications of the Peace-Athabasca Delta Project Group.[26] The main thrust of its investigations was the hydrologic and ecological aspects but useful social and economic studies were also undertaken.

Footnotes

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6. W. Firey, Man, Mind and Land, Glencoe, Il., 1960, p. 241.

7. J. Wolforth, "The Evolution and Economy of the Delta Community," M.D.R.P. No. 11, D.I.A.N.D., Ottawa, 1971.

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10. J.W. Chalmers, On the Edge of the Shiel : Fort Chipewyan and its Hinterland, Occ. Pub., No. 7, Boreal Inst. for Northern Studies, University of Alberta, 1971.

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CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Location and Site

Fort Chipewyan, the oldest continuously settled community in Alberta, is located at the northwestern end of Lake Athabasca, close to the intersection of several major waterways of the Mackenzie drainage system. The Peace and Athabasca rivers drain the Western Cordillera and flow towards Lake Athabasca from the west and southwest; the Fond-du-Lac draining Lake Wollaston joins the eastern arm of Lake Athabasca; and the Slave River flows north, beginning technically where the northwesterly outflow channels from Lake Athabasca join the Peace River.

The Peace and Athabasca rivers are those which have figured most prominently in the history of Fort Chipewyan, since they served as natural routes for Indians, fur traders, explorers, scientists and commercial traffic. North-bound travellers used the Peace and Athabasca rivers extensively, and continued north by the Slave River. The Fond-du-Lac River drains a large portion of northern Saskatchewan and forms the eastern arm of the four major waterways converging near Fort Chipewyan. Thus, the settlement was a transportation hub for the movements of people and freight, and an important stop-over point.

Lake Athabasca, lying at 700 feet above sea level, is almost 200 miles long and although it reaches a depth of 400 feet, is very shallow at the western end. The smooth southern shore rises to a maximum of 500 feet above the lake. The north shore is more rugged and bare, with no more than about 200 feet of local relief variation. The main communities focusing on the lake are Camsell Portage, Uranium City, Fond-du-Lac, and Stony Rapids/Black Lake in Saskatchewan, and Fort Chipewyan in Alberta. (see

figure 1

LOCATION MAP

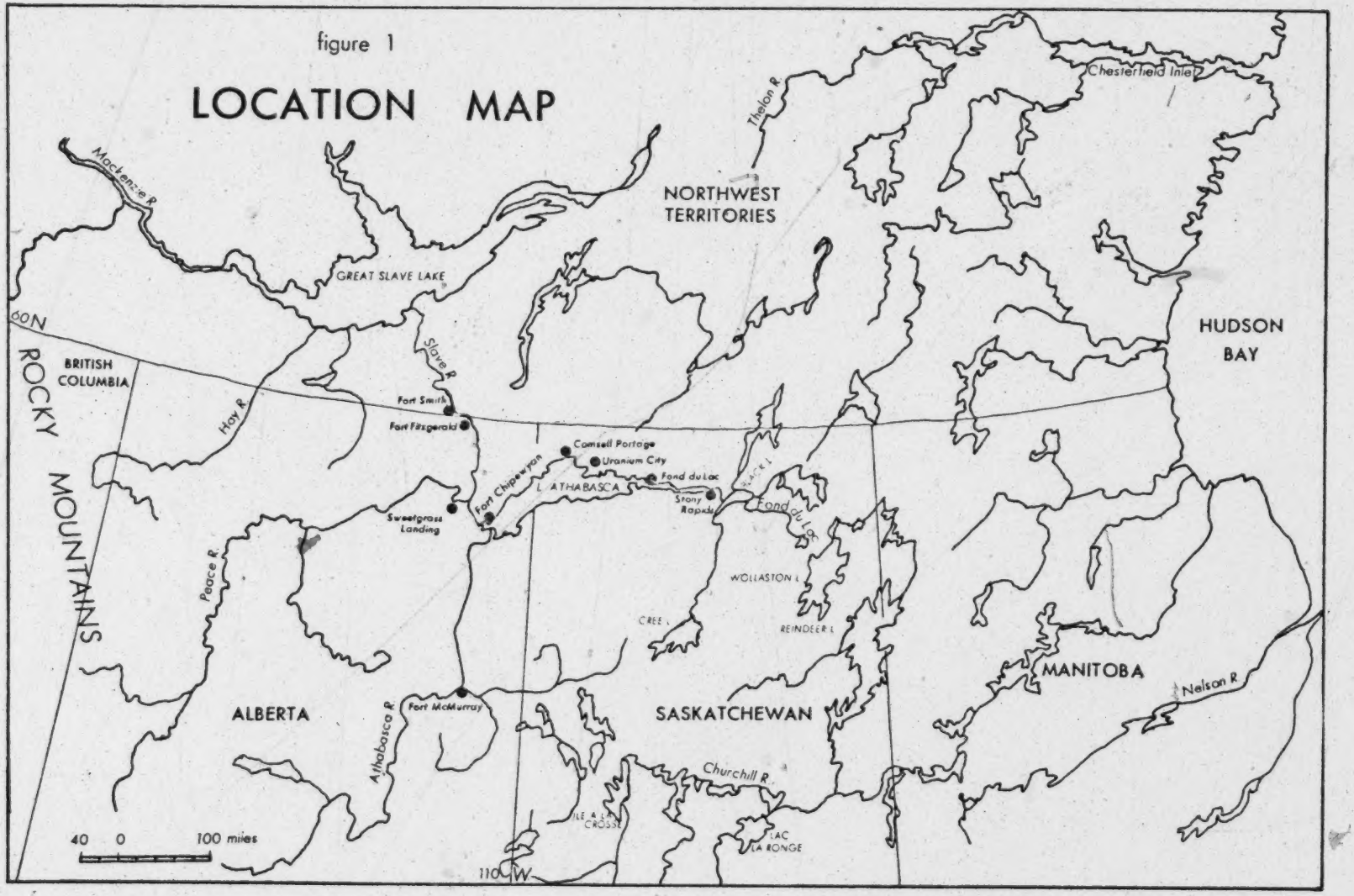


fig. 1). The total population of the area is about 5,000, of which the greatest concentrations are in Fort Chipewyan and Uranium City.

The town of Fort Chipewyan is situated on the south shore of a peninsula on the northwestern end of the lake. It stretches for about three miles along the lake shore, dominated by the granitic masses of the Canadian Shield. In places, these project to a height of over 100 feet at the lake shore, so as to physically divide the settlement.

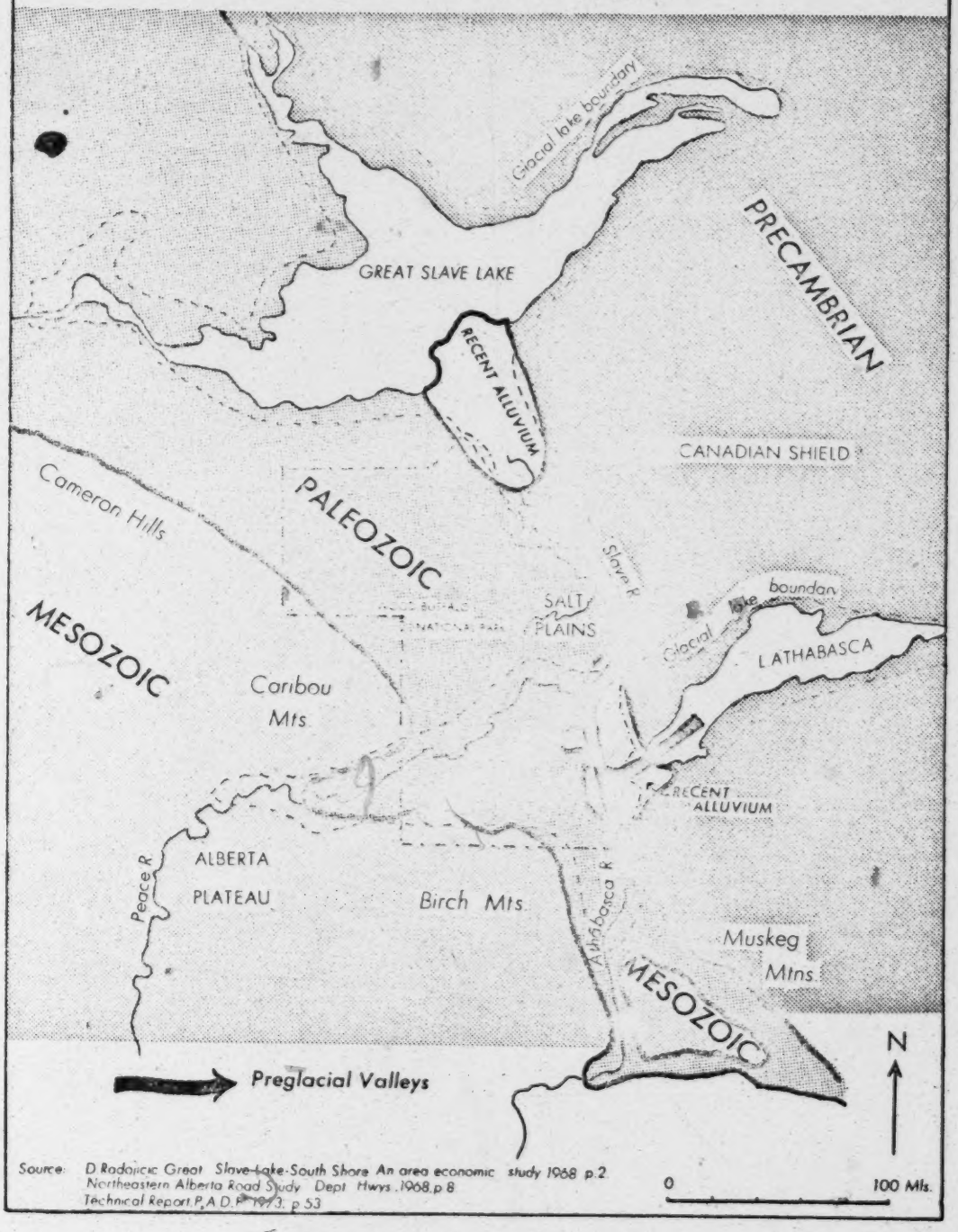
Few dwellings have been built on the rocky outcrops. To the west, they are built on the lower rocky areas between the granite projections, at up to 50 feet above the lake level, and a few scattered buildings may be found as low as the lake shore. The largest number of buildings stand on the arc of lake shore alluvium in the eastern segment of the community, lying about 20 feet above the lake. This section of the settlement is laid out as a regular townsite, but there is no building pattern further west. A gravel road links the airport, six miles to the northeast, with the settlement, and continues through the western segment of the settlement, to disappear in muskeg at the point where the winter road to Fort Smith begins.

Geology and Geomorphology

Fort Chipewyan is near the western edge of the exposed Canadian Shield which extends to the north and east. (see fig. 2). Almost 90% of the Shield surface is composed of granitic outcrops which form gently undulating topography. Numerous scarps and ridges traverse the Shield with a general NE - SW trend, but the fault lines show no dominant alignment. Glacially-scoured rock basins are scattered throughout and some are now occupied by shallow lakes or muskeg. The Shield surface dips gently to the southwest and is largely overlain by Palaeozoic sedimentary strata. A few granitic outliers outcrop in the Peace River delta area, appearing as islands rising

figure 2

GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY, FORT CHIPEWYAN AREA



Source: D. Radojicic Great Slave Lake-South Shore An area economic study 1968 p.2
Northeastern Alberta Road Study Dept. Hwys. 1968 p.8
Technical Report P.A.D.P. 1973. p.53

to 200 feet above the surrounding plains.

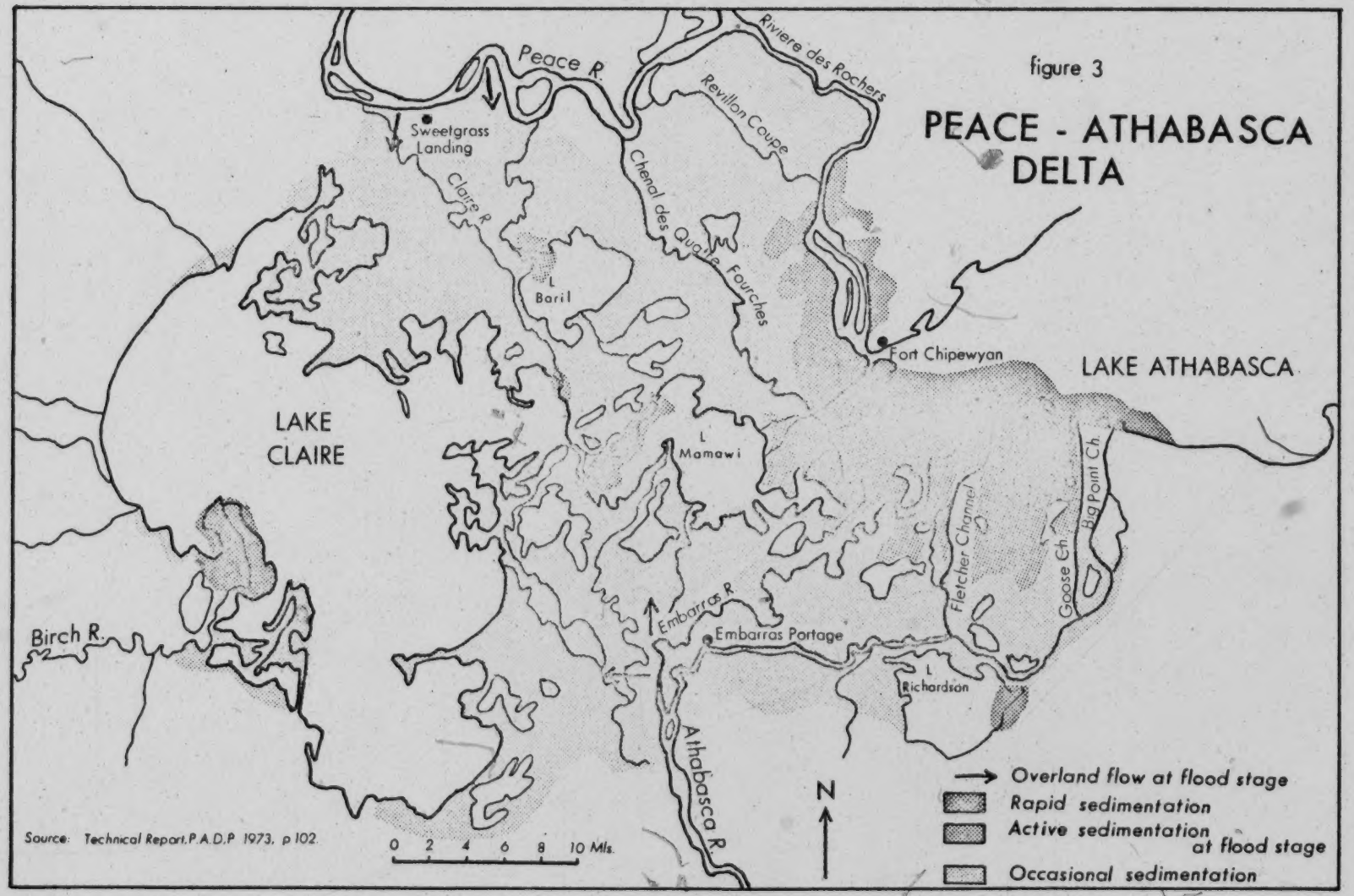
In late Mesozoic times an inland sea covered the whole region, and as it withdrew to the northeast, the area was subject to continuous erosion. Sediments overlying the Shield were completely stripped off. To the west, however, removal proceeded only as far as the Devonian formations, and the Birch and Caribou Mountains are Cretaceous erosional remnants.[1]

During the Pleistocene epoch, continental glaciation caused the N.E.-S.W. erosional lineation on the Shield. The ice followed the course of the northeast flowing preglacial rivers near Lake Athabasca and overdeepened the valleys, causing the lowlands existing in the area today. (see fig. 2). During pauses in glacial retreat to the northeast, large ice-marginal lakes formed. Consequently glacio-lacustrine deposits and raised glacial beaches are found to the west of Lake Claire and Slave River and on both shores of Lake Athabasca up to 300 feet above the present level of the lake. As the unvegetated lacustrine deposits became exposed, aeolian activity occurred, forming sand dunes south of Lake Athabasca, along the Athabasca River, and in the lowlands to the west of Lake Claire.

Immediately after the glacial recession about 10,000 years ago, delta formation began on the Peace and Athabasca rivers. At present the Peace delta is almost inactive but the Athabasca delta is actively extending itself by about one square mile every 13 years.[2] The Peace-Athabasca delta, about 1,500 square miles, forms a typical bird's foot delta. (see fig. 3). Lakes Claire, Baril, Mamawi and Richardson are the major ones in the delta, ranging from two to ten feet deep. The delta topography is extremely flat, so that slight variations in water level affect large areas of land.

The delta consists of large areas of sediment with outcropping islands of the Canadian Shield scattered in the northeastern region. Active

figure 3


PEACE - ATHABASCA DELTA
Peace R.
Riviere des Rochers
Revillon Coupe
Sweetgrass Landing
Claire R.
Chenal des Quatre Fourches
L Baril
Fort Chipewyan
LAKE ATHABASCA
LAKE CLAIRE
L Mamawi
Fletcher Channel
Goose Ch.
Big Point Ch.
Birch R.
Embarras R.
Embarras Portage
L Richardson
Athabasca R.
N
0 2 4 6 8 10 Mls.
Overland flow at flood stage
Rapid sedimentation
Active sedimentation at flood stage
Occasional sedimentation
Source: Technical Report, P.A.D.P. 1973, p 102.

and inactive river channels meander across the delta joining the major lakes to Lake Athabasca, and draining the uplands around the delta. During flood, levees build up along the distributaries to a height of several feet, enclosing large areas interspersed with hundreds of shallow, perched basins. These are only replenished by overland flooding and create thousands of miles of shoreline in the delta.

The Athabasca River has a distinctive high summer discharge and low winter flow. The outflow from Lake Athabasca into the Peace River is by way of the Rivière des Rochers, and Chenal des Quatre Fourches, with a third smaller channel, the Revillon Coupe, being a branch of the Rivère des Rochers. (see fig. 3). Water in the channels may flow into the Peace River or Lake Athabasca, depending on the water levels in the two.

Because of its large size, Lake Athabasca undergoes a considerable annual fluctuation in water which usually averages 5.5 feet. The greatest changes in levels occur when the lake rises from its winter minimum of 682.5 feet (a.s.l) because of high inflow from the Athabasca and Peace Rivers, to its midsummer maximum of 688.0 feet (a.s.l). As this rise nears its peak, the water backed-up and stored in Lake Athabasca spills into the surrounding depressions and perched basins. This unique phenomenon of flow reversal in the lake outlet affects the hydrologic regime of the delta, the vegetation and wildlife, and thus has important implications for the population of Fort Chipewyan.

Climate

Winters in the region are long and severe, and summers are short and warm. The Fort Chipewyan January and July mean minimum temperatures are -24.75°F. and 51.49°F. The mean maximums are -6.08°F. and 71.69°F.[3] The yearly temperature range may be up to 150°F., but the large water

bodies near the settlement do have an ameliorating influence on the climate.

Annual precipitation at Fort Chipewyan is 15.81 inches,[4] with two-thirds of this occurring in May to October. Snow covers the ground from late October until mid April and may total less than 20 inches or over 60 inches. Freeze-up on the water bodies begins in late October, and break-up is in early May.

Vegetation

Coniferous forest is the predominant type around Fort Chipewyan, being part of the extensive Boreal Forest zone, with white spruce (Picea glauca) and jackpine (Pinus banksiana) among the dominant species. The spruce is found mainly on the uplands and along the alluvium of the major streams, while the pine is confined to semi-barren rocky hills and to dry sand knolls and plains.[5]

On the Canadian Shield, the exposed rock outcrops are almost entirely devoid of vegetation, with the low areas supporting black spruce (Picea mariana) and white birch (Betula papyrifera). To the south of Lake Athabasca, dead ice conditions resulted in muskeg in lowlying areas with conifers on the higher ground.

To the west of Fort Chipewyan, forest cover is quite light. Heavier growth is found on the river banks and on the sandy and gravelly upland soils. The drier areas have jackpine forest and a lighter undergrowth. The main variations of the forest types occur over burned areas, where aspen (Populus tremuloides) and poplar (P. balsamifera) have established themselves.

Semi-open prairies are found near the major water courses, especially on the Salt Plains, and have a characteristic cover of herbaceous

vegetation. On the wet-meadows, the blue-joint Calamagrostis canadensis var. robusta is common, with Carex atherodes on the sedge meadows, and a wealth of other perennial herbs and grasses. The alluvial lowlands of the Athabasca, Slave and Peace rivers support aspen groves interspersed with grasses. The higher, better-drained soils support willow (Salix spp.). The lowlands contain extensive "hay-meadows" with species such as blue-joint grass and the meadow sedge Carex trichocarpa var. aristata.

Development of the biological components of the ecosystem occurs parallel with the evolution of the delta, and a definite plant succession is observable. Barren mudflats give way to a sedge, rush and grass zone. Further upstream a few willows appear, becoming denser as banks become higher. Some distance from the lake, poplar and white spruce are seen, with the spruce gradually becoming dominant. Plant succession is controlled mainly by the water regime. The delta may be differentiated into active, semiactive and inactive delta on the basis of hydrologic regime and vegetative succession. (see fig. 3).

Wildlife

All the wildlife populations around Fort Chipewyan have fluctuated historically. On the Canadian Shield, the caribou herds (Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus) have decreased since the arrival of whites on the continent, but recently appear to be slowly increasing.[6] However the migration routes of the herd have been more important than the number of animals to the hunters. The caribou generally spend summer on the timber, and move south to the woodlands for the rest of the year. Although they passed near Fort Chipewyan in historic times, now they never pass nearer than 100 miles to the east of the settlement.

To the southwest of the Shield in the wooded country, moose (Alces

alces) are found. Once a prime source of game, moose decreased throughout the early 1900's but there has been a steady increase since the 1940's.[7] The varied habitat of the older areas of the delta is well suited to the moose who depend on aquatic plants and the twigs of shrubs and young trees. There are about 800 moose on the delta and many more are found on the Birch and Caribou Mountains, and the Alberta Plateau.

Wood Buffalo National Park was created in 1922 to protect the few remaining herds of wood bison (Bison bison athabascae) in Canada, since only about 1,500 inhabited the park area then. In 1926 more than 6,600 plains bison were taken from the former Buffalo National Park at Wainwright, and released northwest of Fort Chipewyan. Soon after, 400 moved into the Peace-Athabasca Delta where the sedge meadows provided fodder, and the park was enlarged to include a major portion of the delta. Since that time the herd has grown to between 10,000 and 12,000.

A small number of Elk (Cervus canadensis) were transplanted to the Birch River area in 1949 with the original intention of providing a meat supply for the natives.[8] They have been gradually increasing. Black bears (Ursus Americanus) are everywhere abundant in the Park. The most important of the smaller fur bearers is muskrat (Ondatra zibethica). It is found largely in the delta area where ponded sloughs provide ideal habitat for shelter and feeding purposes. The beaver (Castor canadensis) is also important and is found in the higher part of the delta. Many other smaller fur bearers abound in the delta and the foothills of the mountains to the northwest and southwest.

Waterfowl

The delta is a prime waterfowl production area, but also harbours hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl each year. They use it for

nesting and moulting and gather to nest and feed during the long flights to and from northerly nesting grounds. It also serves as a retreat in years of drought on the Prairie breeding grounds. It is unique in being situated on all four major fly-ways of the North American continent - the Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic flyways. During spring staging, almost 600,000 swans, ducks and geese populate the delta. Moulting populations in late June and July are about 500,000. Approximately 1,200,000 ducks use the delta as a stop-over to points further south during fall staging.[9]

Fish

There are several species of fish in the lakes and rivers around Fort Chipewyan. Goldeye (Hiodon alesoides) were commercially fished in Lake Claire until 1966. Walleye or pickerel (Stizostedion v. vitreum) and northern pike (Esox lucius) are common in the delta area and are commercially fished in Lake Athabasca. Lake trout (Salvelinus namaycush) are found in the deeper, cooler waters of the main body of Lake Athabasca. Whitefish (Coregonus clupeaformis) are common in the shallow waters of the west end of Lake Athabasca.

Native Population Distribution

"Chipewyan" is a Cree word meaning "pointed skin," referring to the parkas with pointed tails at the front and back which the Lake Athabasca Chipewyans wore. The term was subsequently extended to include all Athapascan tribes. The Chipewyans form a dialectic division of the Athapascan linguistic stock.

The principal subdivisions of the tribe seem to have been the Athabascans or Chipewyan proper, who occupied the area between Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake and the territory to the east; the Desnedekanade

occupying the Slave River and Fort Resolution area; the Thilanottine who in later times obtained the upper waters of the Churchill River about Ile a la Crosse Lake and Cold Lake; the Tatsanottine or Yellowknives who are sometimes considered to be an independent group lying to the northeast of Great Slave Lake; and the Etheneldeli or Caribou-Eaters, who mainly occupied the area around Lakes Caribou, Axe and Brochet, and around Fort Churchill at Hudsons Bay.

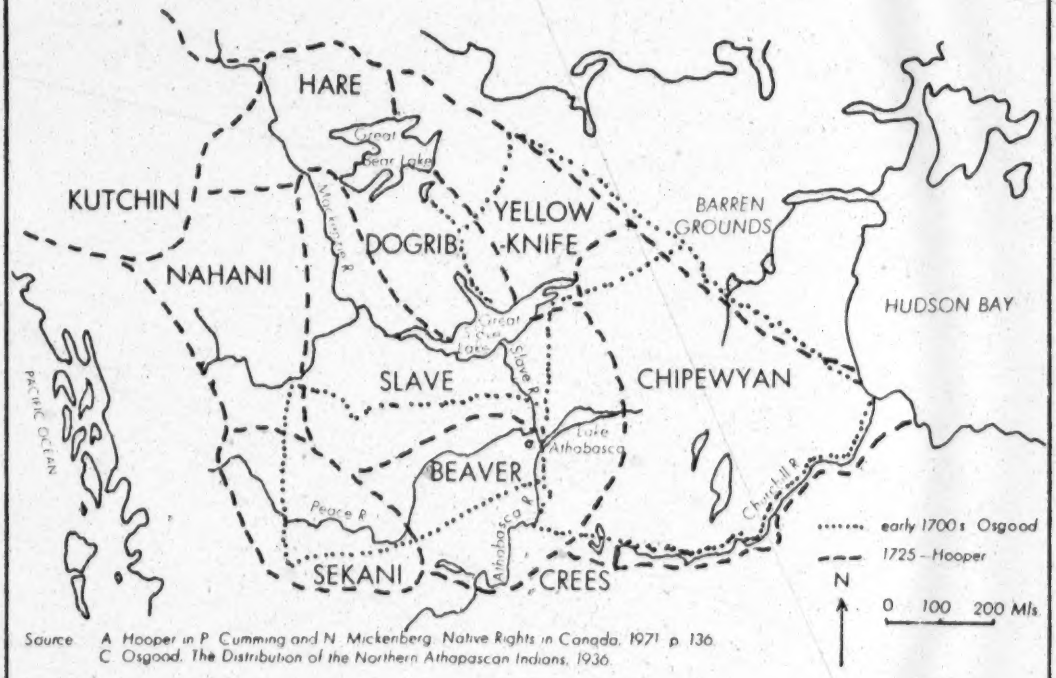
The main concern of this study is with the Indians who resort to Fort Chipewyan. The Athabascan Chipewyans are the main ones dealt with and will be called Chipewyans. The other distinct group who resorted to Fort Chipewyan are the Etheneldeli, and they will be referred to as the Caribou-Eaters.

The geographic range of Indians around Lake Athabasca before the time of contact with Europeans is not known exactly. However, it is generally agreed that in pre-contact times, the Chipewyans occupied the country inland from Hudson Bay at the place where Fort Churchill was later to be built, (see fig. 4). Their territory stretched from Churchill north of the Churchill or English River to Ile a la Crosse, Buffalo Lake, the Athabasca River to Lake Athabasca. It did not include the extreme west of the lake but extended east of the Slave River to Great Slave Lake and also included a tract of the Barren grounds. The Beaver Indians occupied the western end of Lake Athabasca and the Peace River. The Slave Indians occupied the area west of the Slave River, and the Yellowknives were to the northeast of Great Slave Lake. To the south of the Churchill River were the Algonquin Cree.

The Woodland Cree were in direct contact with the fur traders at Hudson Bay. With guns obtained from the traders they terrified the Inland Indians and pushed them north and west. The Beaver were pushed

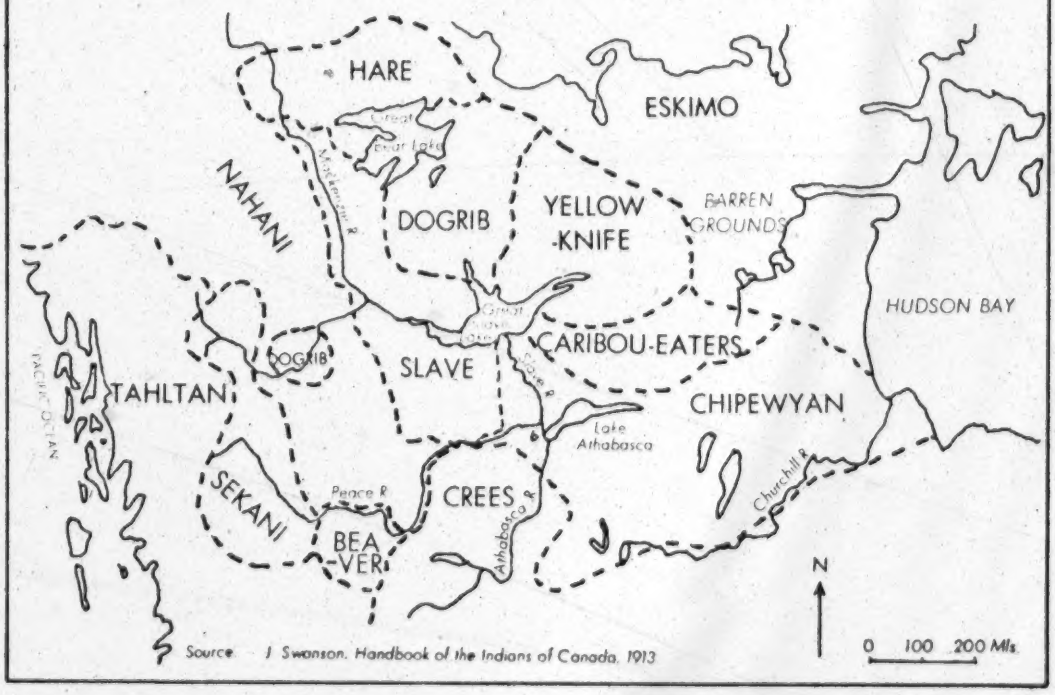
figure 4

INDIAN DISTRIBUTION IN EARLY 1700'S



Source A Hooper in P Cumming and N Mickenberg Native Rights in Canada, 1971 p 136
C Osgood, The Distribution of the Northern Athapascan Indians, 1936

INDIAN DISTRIBUTION IN EARLY 1900'S



Source J Swanson, Handbook of the Indians of Canada, 1913

west out of the Lake Athabasca area, the Slaves were pushed to the western end of Great Slave Lake, and the Chipewyans were pushed northwest from Churchill and north and east from Lake Athabasca. The Chipewyan therefore, came to occupy the fringe of the forest zone and the Barren grounds.

The Chipewyans eventually obtained arms from the traders following the establishment of Fort Churchill in 1717 on the Bay and were able to retrieve some of their lost territory. Around 1781, a decisive change in territorial occupance was caused largely by the smallpox epidemic which decimated the Cree. In their weakened state, they had no alternative but to retreat southwards in the face of the tribes they had previously displaced.

When the white traders came into the Athabasca country in the 1780's, the Chipewyans occupied the whole of Lake Athabasca, (see fig. 4), and the Beavers occupied the lower Peace River. Although a few Cree lingered in these areas, the tribe mainly occupied the area to the south.[10] The Athabasca Chipewyans occupied the Fort Chipewyan area, and the Caribou-Eaters extended north east.[11]

Footnotes

1. H.M. Raup, "Botanical Investigations in Wood Buffalo National Park" Biol. Ser. No. 20, Nat. Museum of Canada. Bull. No. 74, 1935, p. 13.

2. Technical Report, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, p. 101.

3. Canada, Dept. of the Environment, "Monthly Record of Meteorological Observations in Canada," Atmospheric Environment, Ottawa, ten-year mean figures 1963-1973.

4. loc. cit.

5. Raup, op. cit, p. 18

6. D. Radojicic, Great Slave Lake-South Shore: An Area Economic Survey, D.I.A.N.D., Industrial Division, Ottawa, 1968.

7. N.S. Novakowski. Fur Resources Survey of Wood Buffalo National Park. Unpub. M.S., C.W.S., Fort Smith, 1958, p. 43.

8. When Wood Buffalo National Park was established, the hunting and trapping rights of the native trappers were guaranteed. These rights are hereditary, but are regulated by licenses. All the animals except buffalo may be hunted for domestic use, but the populations are managed by closed seasons or quotas, if the numbers decrease.

9. These figures are from the 1971, C.W.S. census, in "Technical Report," op. cit. pp. 64, 65, 68.

10. R. Glover (ed.) David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812, Toronto, 1962, p. 115.

11. W.K. Lamb, (ed.), The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Toronto, 1970, p. 149.

CHAPTER III

FUR TRADE

The Chipewyans had been involved in the fur trade long before any Europeans visited the Athabasca area. They were forced to trade with Cree middlemen at first, but traded directly with the Europeans after the establishment of Fort Churchill in 1717. The Chipewyans then acted as middlemen with tribes to the north and west. The H. B. C. was understandably anxious to bring the natives to trade at Hudson Bay rather than establish inland trading posts since the coastal trade was commercially advantageous in that "it placed on the Indians the cost of transporting the furs to the seaside and goods inland."[1]

The Canadian 'Pedlars' based on Montreal were not content to wait until the Indians brought their furs east. Instead they themselves travelled to meet the Indians and persuaded them to part with their choicest furs before continuing to Hudson Bay.

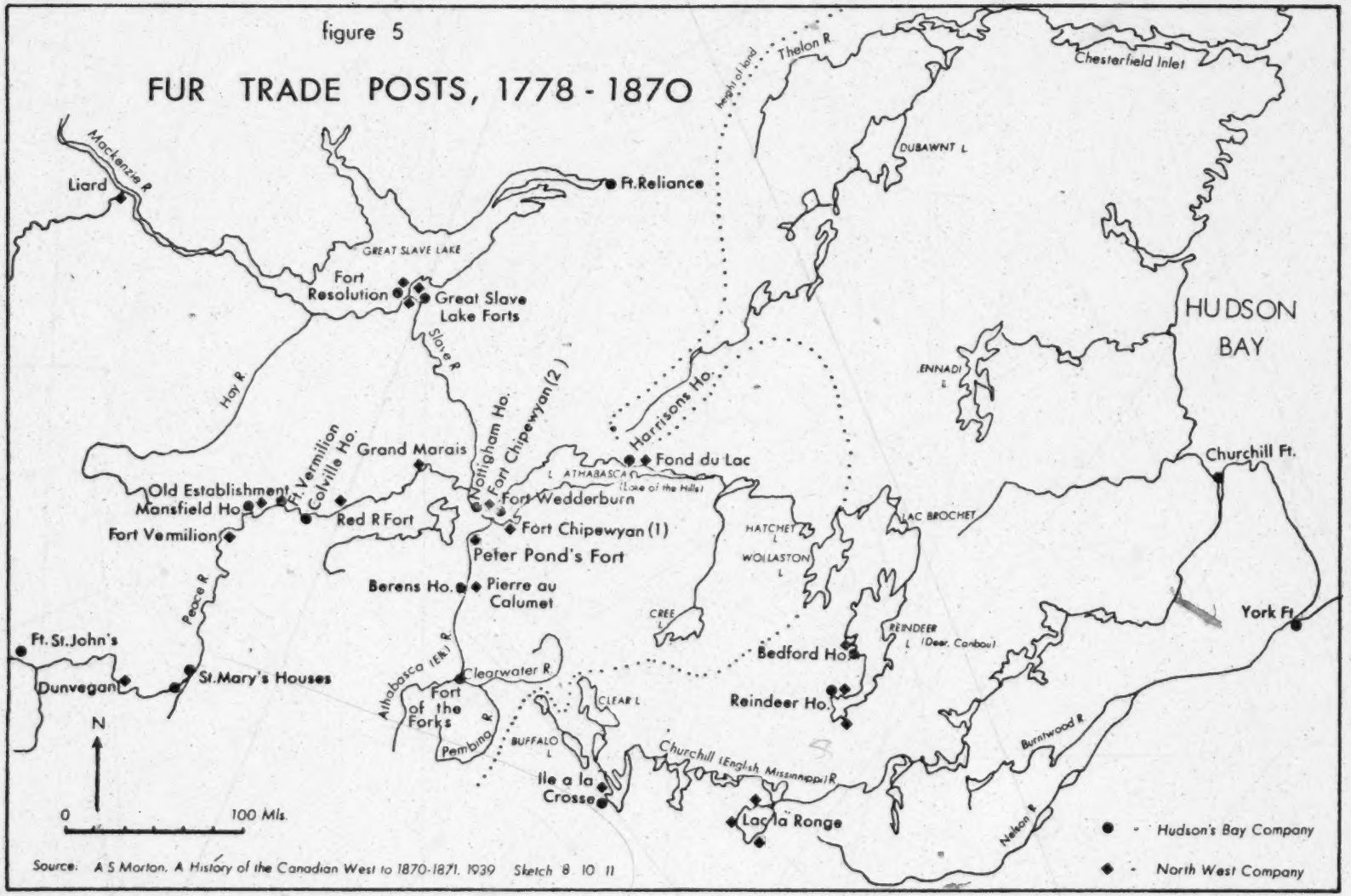
The Traders Move Inland

The H. B. C. naturally resented the intrusion of the Pedlars into its territory and was forced to set up inland trading posts. This made it necessary for the French to penetrate even farther west in search of Indians. In 1778, Peter Pond, supported by several French interests, was directed to enter the Churchill River and proceed "if possible, to Athabasca, a country hitherto unknown but from Indian report."[2] He built a fort called Pond's House on the Athabasca River, 40 miles from Lake Athabasca, and spent the winter of 1778-1779 there. (see fig. 5).

The Indians were delighted to have traders come to their country and save them the arduous journey to the Bay, and Pond's trading venture proved highly successful. This success helped prompt the partnership between the

figure 5

FUR TRADE POSTS, 1778 - 1870



Source: A S Morton. A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871. 1939 Sketch 8 10 11

Montreal Pedlars which became the nucleus of the North West Company,[3] the main rivals of the H. B. C. in the Athabasca district.[4]

Athabasca: Traders Arrive and Fort Chipewyan Established

Mackenzie was in charge of the Athabasca trade in 1787 at Pond's House and ordered the establishment of a new fort on the south shore of Lake Athabasca. He realised that "Lake Athabasca would be a more central point from which to send his messages to the [Indian] traders, and to which they could come conveniently with their furs." He saw that Lake Athabasca "on account of its geographical position, was the key to the far north."[5] From this post he set out on both his voyages of exploration to the north and west.

In 1790, Philip Turnor and Peter Fidler were sent by the H. B. C. to find a shorter route to Lake Athabasca than the one via Churchill River, Methye Portage and the Athabasca River used by the N. W. C. The two men saw the great potential trading prospects in the district and promised to come back the following year to trade. However, it was not until 1802 that Fidler could return.

Seasonal and Annual Native Population Movements

In the 17th Century, the Chipewyan, depending almost entirely upon caribou for existence, followed these animals to the Barren lands in summer, and to the forests in winter. After contact with the traders and introduced to the advantages of incorporating trapping in their hunting economy, the Chipewyans' seasonal movements altered to include the journey to the fur trading centres. Although most of the Chipewyans preferred to return to their Barren lands in summer and hunt caribou, a major change in economic activity with associated changes in population movements resulted

from contact with the traders. It appears that it was contact with, and the presence of traders which caused the Thilanottine to subdivide from the Chipewyan tribe, and move south to occupy the Churchill River area.

> "Within these thirty years [prior to 1809] however, the Chipewyan tribes have emigrated in considerable numbers from Athabasca and the Barren lands ... to the banks of the Mississippi [Missinippi, or Churchill River], finding the country more suited to their purposes; good hunting grounds and the articles of goods which they require being at a more reasonable rate than in the more distant ports where they had been fixed to trade."[6]

The earliest Athabasca post journal was written at Pond's House on the Athabasca River. Table 3-1 shows the number of visits made by natives at the spring trading season, and indicates the numbers of visitors, their point of origin, and purpose of visit. No doubt there are a number of Indians who came more than once to the post, thus no exact total can be found. However, it is evident that Bras Cafsen's band plus the English Chief and Bigg (sic) Chief's bands would alone amount to about 700 people.

Determining the total number of Chipewyans is a difficult problem.

> "The territories of this nation are so extensive which allows them to run from one place to another as renders it impossible to determine accurately the number of souls that make the lake their local residence as from their naturally unsettled disposition, they very seldom attach themselves to a particular place for any long period of time."[7]

The most precise account available of the numbers of Indians coming to Lake Athabasca, is 300 hunters in 1792.[8] If it is assumed that there are 5.5 people per family, then this amounts to a total of about 1650 Indians.[9] This does not seem unreasonable considering the fact that Petitot says that in 1778 "there were as many as 1,200 Redskins settled on the Lake."[10]

Table 3-1

Indian Visits to Peter Pond's Trading Establishment, April 1 to May 6, 1786

Date	Reference to a Visit	Numbers	Tribe	Origin
Apr.1,1786	"Bigg Chief's Band"	20		
	"Old Chief's Band"	?		
	"One Man came"	1	Chipewyan	other side of Lake Athabasca
	"Tittoris, Chief of the Beaver Indians"	1	Beaver	
	"Party of Seven"	7		Little Lake Athabasca
	"Arrived six Crees and one Slave	7	Gt.Slave	Beaver River
2*	"Achibawayans"	?	Chipewyan	
3*	"Three Achibawayans"	3	Chipewyan	Above
	"L'homme de Castor arrived with two other Crees	3	Cree	
	"Shining Rock's Band"	?		
	"Old Blind woman & her son"	2		
5*	"Two Achibawayans"	2	Chipewyan	Lac de Brochet
6*	"The Boudar arrived with two others"	3	Chipewyan	Above
8	"The Cariajeau and two other Crees arrived"	3	Cree	other side of Lake Athabasca
9*	"The Chantian with two others"	3	Chipewyan	Above
10*	"One Achibawyan from Bchinde"	1	Chipewyan	
	"Two young men from the English chief"	2	Chipewyan	
	"The Old Chief; the Chief Cancre & Grand Piccotte, in all 10 Lodges Camping at the Fort"	about 80		
11	"The Rock qui Resouis with five men arrived"	6		Above
*	"Two Achibawayans"	2	Chipewyan	Above
12	"Three Crees"	3	Cree	Above
13*	"Arrived to (sic) Achibawayans"	2	Chipewyan	Below
16	"Indians"	2		
	"Three Achibawayans"	3	Chipewyan	Above
*	"Crees"	?	Cree	Below
17	"Three Achibawayans"	3	Chipewyan	Below
18	"Two Crees from the Bras Cafsen"	2	Cree	Portage de Pin
19	"Three Achibawayans"	3	Chipewyan	Below
	"Bras Cafsen" (with 44 Lodges)	1 plus about 350	Cree	Above
20	"Three Achibawayans"	3	Chipewyan	Below
21	"The English Chief arrived with 40 men with him"	41	Chipewyan	Below
23*	"Cree"	1	Cree	
May 4	"A pack of Indians"	?		
6	"The Bigg Chief's son-in-law arrived"	1	Chipewyan	the other side of Lake Athabasca

*An asterisk refers to provision hunts rather than or as well as fur hunts.
N.B.'Above' and 'below' probably mean above or below the Athabasca river from Pond's House.

Source: North West Company Post Journal. Athabasca 1786, H.B.C. F.2/1

COMPANY COMPETITION

The main Montreal-based rival of the N. W. C. was the New North West Company, or XY Company.[11] It was tolerated by the N. W. C., "but when at last these, [traders] entered the Athabasca department [in 1800], which was considered the fur reservoir of the established company, open warfare was declared."[12] By 1802, the H. B. C. had also established a post near Fort Chipewyan and fierce competition was the order of the day. (see fig. 5). The N. W. C. men bullied or robbed those Indians who dared trade with the other concerns. The XYC. was forced into amalgamation with the N. W. C. in 1804, and with this doubly strong opposition, the H. B. C. was forced out of the Athabasca District in 1806.

Although the N. W. C. once more monopolized the fur trade in the Northwest, a new problem in the trade was being increasingly felt all over the country - a scarcity of furs, especially beaver. Despite a decline in the Athabasca District too, its yield had become increasingly important in the total production of furs, and both companies realised that whoever controlled Athabasca, controlled the trade. In 1811 the N. W. C. attempted to bargain with the H. B. C. for a portion of the fur country, and was willing to modify its proposal (see fig. 6) <u>provided Athabasca was reserved for the N. W. C.</u> The H. B. C. firmly rejected the proposal.

In 1815, the H. B. C. entered the Athabasca District once again, but had to survive several years of hostilities between the companies, with company servants and Indians being maltreated by the opposition. This state of competition existed until 1821, when the two companies agreed to unite under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

<u>Native Population Movements and Economic Activity</u>

The Indians had little incentive to trap when the companies were

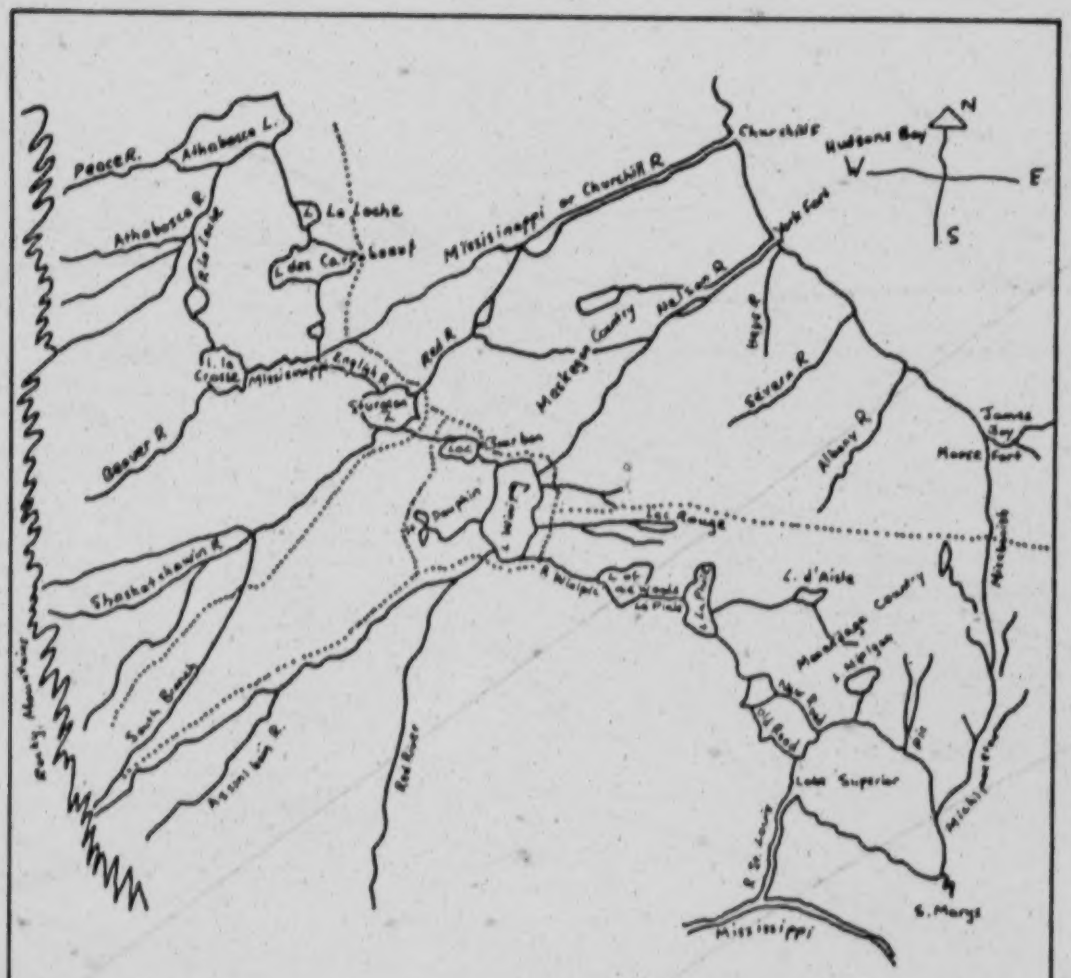


figure 6

PARTITION OF THE FUR TRADE DISTRICTS PROPOSED BY THE NORTH WEST COMPANY, 1811

Source an original sketch map. Hudsons Bay Company Archives A 10/1 folio 90B in K.G. Davies. Aspects of the Fur Trade, 1965, p 25

striving to undersell each other and give easy credit, thus competition encouraged native indolence and injured the trade. In 1799, the last year of N. W. C. monopoly, 15 canoes were brought in only half-loaded with goods, and 640 90-pound packs were brought out. By 1803, the N. W. C. brought in 20 fully-loaded canoes, yet did not bring out three full canoes, and had only 182 packs from the whole Athabasca District. The XYC. had 31 packs and the H. B. C. had even less.[13]

In the early fur trade, the Indians came to the forts at two main periods of the year, spring and autumn. In October, they received credits and left for their winter hunts, and returned to trade in March.[14] During competition, the Indians had no need to visit the fort so often as company men were sent out to the Indian camps to procure furs. They remained relatively stationary throughout any one season, assured of supplies whether they hunted or not. Thus the movements of many bands became less wide-ranging as a result of competition between companies.

Little information exists on native population movements and activities until 1820. That which is available indicates a similar pattern of native activity to that existing in the very early years of the 19th century. Individual Chipewyans still travelled to Churchill to trade. In addition, there were many wide-ranging movements to the east, Deers Lake, Ile ala Crosse and other establishments. Occasionally exceptional movements were precipitated by strong attractions to a distant trading post, or by fear of remaining near Fort Chipewyan.[15]

A clockwise, yearly movement of Indians was evident. They would make

> " ... a circuit easterly by Carribeau Lake; to the south by Isle ala Crosse; and Westerly to the Banks of Peace River, and so avaricious are they, that the prospect of Gain I have no doubt would lead them much further, did not the Warlike Tribes to the Southward and Westward intimidate them."[16]

By the 1820's a definite distinction between the two types of Chipewyans resorting to Athabasca had appeared - those who made the easterly circuit through the fur bearing lands, and regularly visited the fort, and the Caribou-Eaters who spent their time hunting for subsistence on the Barren lands, only coming to the fort when they chose, or when particularly in want of such articles as ammunition or bacco. The traders

> were "anxious to withdraw them from the vicinity of their own barren lands, where they maintain themselves with little exertion on the Caribou and neglect the more valuable animals, which are very rare in that part of the country."17

Numbers of Natives Resorting to Lake Athabasca

As already mentioned, Turnor observed that about 300 hunters traded at the Lake, which amounts to 1,650 total, based on a 5.5-person family unit. Jenness recorded

> "In the years 1801-2-3, there were not fewer than fifty tents that were at the Post at the Lake, which at an average, by allowing two beaver hunters, two women and four men including superannuated men and women, would make in all four hundred souls, etc."18

By using a reckoning of eight people per lodge, as above, and 5.5 people per family, the population for the early 19th century can be calculated. (see fig. 9).

The number of Indians decreased by at least a third in 30 years, as in 1821. Simpson reported that the number of hunters coming to Lake Athabasca rarely exceeded 200 families, i.e. less than 1200 Indians.

Non-Spatial Impacts of Outsiders

A considerable number of outsiders were based at Lake Athabasca, especially in the last years of competition. They exerted an influence over the natives beyond the sphere of trading. The N. W. C. men took

Indian squaws which gave them a great hold on the natives "for the various tribes naturally traded with the forts in which their women were installed."[20] By contrast, the H. B. C. did not permit European or native women to be kept at its forts. Simpson complained that this rule was not in the Company's interests and "tantamount to a prohibition of forming a most important chain of connection with the natives."[21] Whether or not the Europeans' interests in Indian women could be entirely justified as a business expense, the fact is certain that the relationships were common. Many became partners for life and were productive of the mixed bloods, or Métis offspring. The Métis became a significant and useful group in the fur trade and comprised a large part of the work force.

The Indians were essential components of the fur trade. The whole machinery of the trade was not possible without their active co-operation, and "from the beginning the tenor of contact between Indian and European in the subarctic forest was one of mutual trade advantage."[22] The only time when this relationship broke down was in periods of trading competition.

Despite the supposed advantages of competition for the Indians, no one really gained. The Indians were bribed and bullied for furs and debauched by liquor. The amount of spirits expended, doubled during competition.[23] Native movements and dispersion were affected by the availability of liquor. "As soon as the Indians got a few furs, they left off hunting to take their booty to the forts, which often were many miles away, to procure a drink of rum."[24] Spirits were "the means of causing large crowds to collect and wait each other at certain stated periods when they would otherwise be actively and usefully employed."[25]

TRADE MONOPOLY

The disordered state of the country and losses due to opposition could not last forever. In 1821, the two concerns united under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company. The lack of competition had an immediate effect on the fur trade. The Indian could not obtain credit and gifts so easily, but was given a much more stable price for his pelts. The transition process was often resisted by the Indians, especially the elimination of spirits and the "debt" system (whereby goods obtained at the beginning of the trapping season were repaid by furs at the end of the season), and the introduction of barter which was practically unknown before the union.

Cree and Chipewyans: Hunters or Trappers

One of the most important duties of the fort employees was procuring enough fish to feed the numerous inmates of the fort. However, often the fisheries failed and then the fort had to resort to the precious dried provisions, if no meat were available. To supply this meat, the factor employed native hunters who, while handy in winter were "almoft indispensable" in spring.[26] Paradoxically, the traders were not too anxious to employ many fort hunters, as this would eliminate the best hunters from trading furs.

A long-standing question has been the difference between various Indian tribes, and Métis. Simpson felt there was a definite difference between the Chipewyan and Cree. He preferred Cree hunters as they were "more adroit in killing the buffalo and deer,"[27] but this was not the opinion of most ither factors. Stewart initially felt that there was little difference between them. However, after some experience, he complained "the Chipewyans seem to make out a livelyhood; the Crees on the same lands cannot pass one winter without privation."[28] Keith also felt that the Crees had degenerated enormously, although he had honestly tried

many methods of encouraging them to hunt, with no success.[29] By 1856, the Crees were regarded as hopeless. The increasing unreliability of the Cree meant that a larger number of half-breeds were attached to the fort as hunters.

Numbers of Outsiders at Fort Chipewyan

Ever-increasing numbers of traders poured into the Athabasca District during the period of competition. On New Year's Day, 1800, there were only 14 men and women at Fort Chipewyan.[30] The H. B. C. had less than a dozen men at Lake Athabasca from 1802-1806, but the N. W. C. outnumbered them by five to one.[31] Between 1815 and 1821, when competition was at its peak, increased numbers of servants were employed by both companies. The H. B. C. had over 30 men by 1818-19 and the N. W. C. had over 70 men by 1816-17.[32]

After the union, large numbers of fort servants were not required and the numbers were quickly reduced. In 1823-24 there were two officers, 57 hands, and 61 women, children and dependants at the fort, making 118 total.[33] The numbers dropped to less than 100 people in the 1820's and levelled off at just over 20 men for the next four decades.[34] The population increased gradually to about 35 men in the late 1860's, and was no doubt partially due to the threat of free traders in the vicinity.[35]

There have always been problems in hiring workers to go north, and of transiency. Fidler recorded "Mr. Tomison had much difficulty in getting them to agree to go to that Country [Athabasca], principally on account of the poor living ... and the great length of the road."[35] In the 1830's it was difficult to hire men for more than two or three years.[36] The difficulty extended to a rapid turnover of proprietors or 'headmen' too. "The continual change of traders is much disliked by the Chipewyans, and does great injury to the business."[37] Obviously the Indians reacted to

transiency over a century ago in much the same way as today.

Native Movements and Economic Activity

The Crees, a small group of from 15 to 40 hunters, frequented the Athabasca River in the 1700's and early 1800's. By the 1820's, they wintered about Bark (Birch) Mountain.[38] Messengers from the main parties of Cree calculated their travelling distance to Fort Chipewyan in 'sleeps' or 'nights,' and the Cree wintering grounds varied between three and seven nights away towards the Birch Mountains. (see fig. 7).

Although the number of Cree on the Birch Mountains caused a scarcity of animals there by the 1830's, they continued to hunt that area for several decades.[39] By the 1830's, their summer grounds had also moved from the Athabasca River, to Clear Lake, Slave River, Peace River, Hay River, and Jackfish River on the Peace. The Cree hunting grounds are all within 100 miles of the settlement in winter and within 50 miles in summer. Their earlier grounds at Berens House and the Forks of the Clearwater and Pembina (Christina) Rivers, were twice as far from the fort and to the South. Previously they had remained about the Athabasca River all year, thus a gradual west and northwest movement with greater proximity to the fort occurred after the monopoly.

The area which could be considered the Chipewyan hunting grounds

> "... extends from Chesterfields Inlet about N. Lat. 63 to Burnt Wood Carrying Place. N. L. 56 - bounded on the East by Churchill on the West by the R. M.s on the South by Beaver River & following the communication of the large Craft towards Cumberland House"[40]

This area refers to both Chipewyans' and Caribou-Eaters' territory.

By the late 1820's, the division between these two groups was very evident. The Caribou-Eaters travelled extensively to the north and east

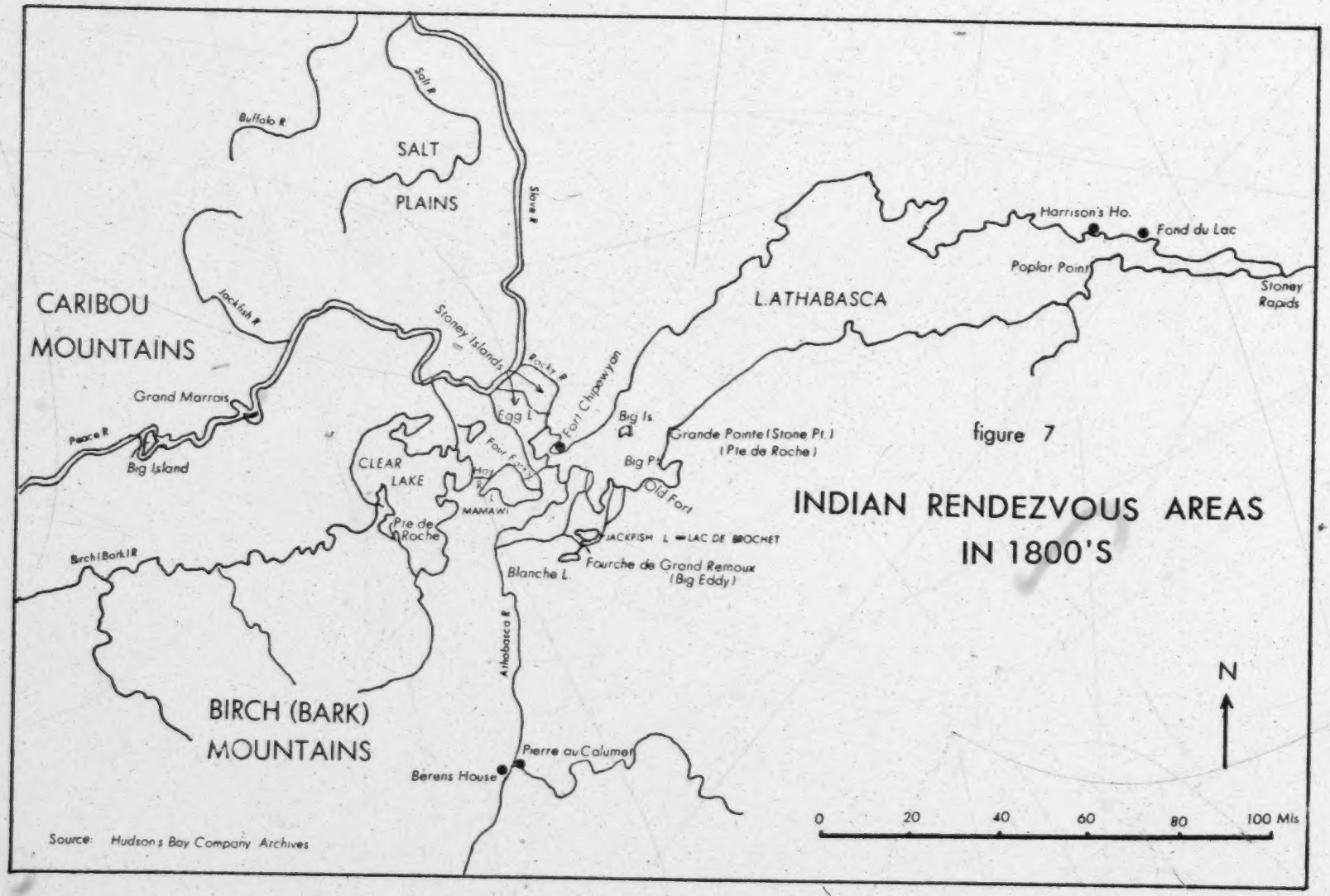


figure 7

INDIAN RENDEZVOUS AREAS IN 1800'S

of Fort Chipewyan. Fort Reliance, established after 1821, became a major post for them as it was nearer their lands and it took only "a season" to go there and back. It was evidently

> "a very common practise for the less industrious of this tribe to pay a visit to their lands every other summer and return ... with some trifling hunts the ensuing winter or spring for the purpose of procuring the requisite supplies of ammunition."[41]

The traders tried to encourage the Caribou-Eaters to leave their lands since they

> "occupy about 34 days on their journey here and back on the first, and as long on the last ice ... loosing upwards of two months of the best fur hunting season besides eating more provisions on the road than they bring here."[42]

Parties of up to 40 hunters arrived in late November with provisions, and returned in February, March and April with some furs. They did not consistently trade at one post. Isle a la Crosse, Black Lake, Lac la Ronge, Carribeau (Reindeer) Lake, Fort Reliance or Churchill were all visited by these Indians, even in the late 1800's. (see fig. 8).

The Athabasca Chipewyans remained much nearer to Fort Chipewyan than the Caribou-Eaters. Before the union, they made a circuit to the east around Lake Athabasca. After the 1820's there are far fewer mentions of this winter circuit. A post was established at the forks of the Pembina (Christina) river, principally to protect the trade of the Athabasca District, since the Chipewyans frequently passed the place in the course of their winter hunts.[43] (see fig. 8).

Occasionally a band of Chipewyans would go to their lands in summer and sometimes parties went quite far to the southeast, about Lac la Ronge. In general, however, it appears that movements to the east and southeast definitely decrease from the 1820's. A few Chipewyans sometimes went to

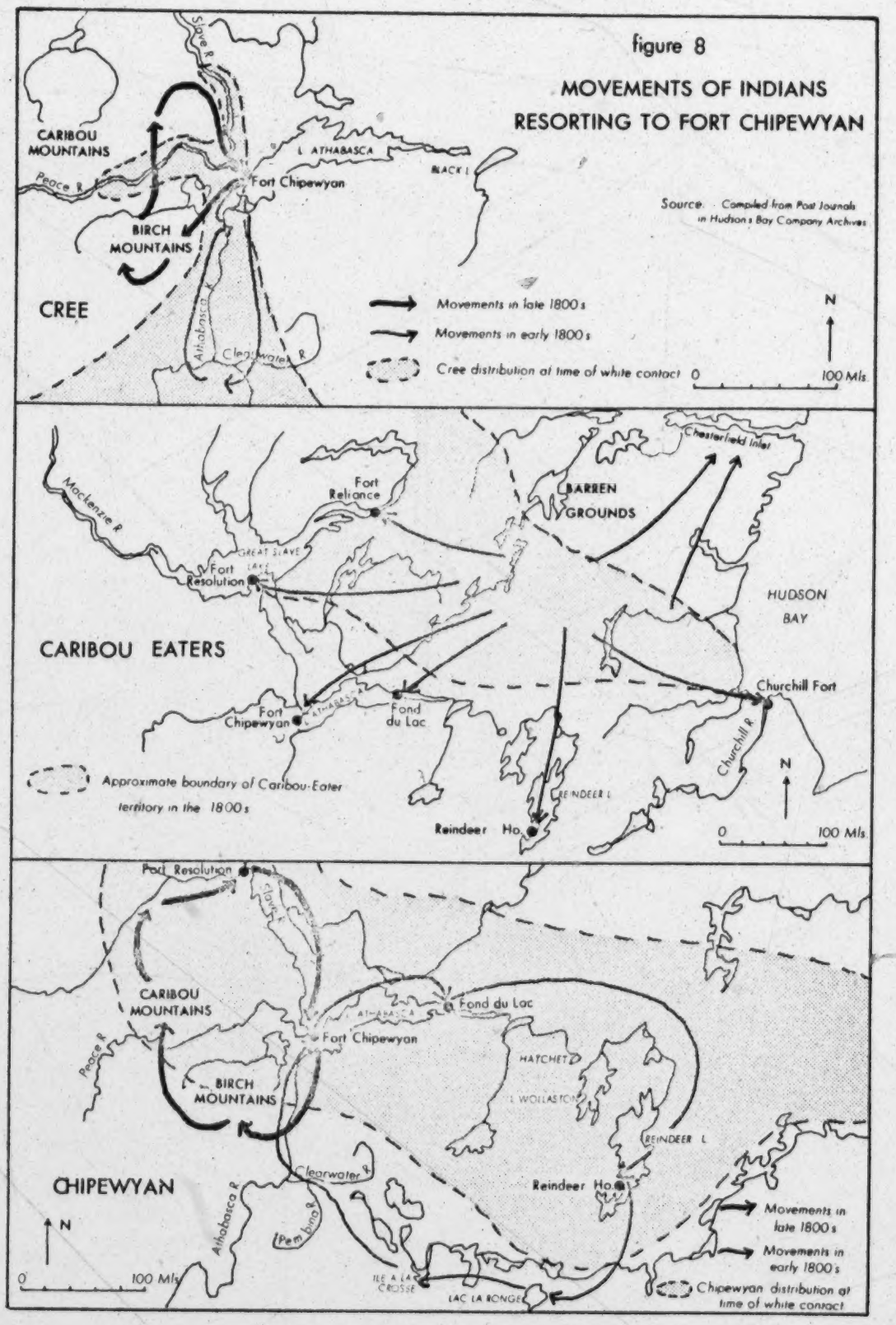


figure 8
MOVEMENTS OF INDIANS
RESORTING TO FORT CHIPEWYAN
Source: Compiled from Post Journals in Hudson's Bay Company Archives
CARIBOU MOUNTAINS
Peace R
BIRCH MOUNTAINS
Slave R
L ATHABASCA
BLACK L
Fort Chipewyan
CREE
Athabasca R
Clearwater R
Movements in late 1800's
Movements in early 1800's
Cree distribution at time of white contact
N
0
100 Mls
Mackenzie R
Fort Reliance
GREAT SLAVE LAKE
Fort Resolution
Chesterfield Inlet
BARREN GROUNDS
HUDSON BAY
CARIBOU EATERS
Fort Chipewyan
Fond du Lac
Churchill Fort
Churchill R
REINDEER L
Reindeer Ho.
Approximate boundary of Caribou-Eater territory in the 1800's
Pond Resolution
CARIBOU MOUNTAINS
Peace R
BIRCH MOUNTAINS
Fond du Lac
Fort Chipewyan
HATCHET L
WOLLASTON L
REINDEER L
Clearwater R
Reindeer Ho.
CHIPEWYAN
Athabasca R
Pembina R
ILE A LA CROSSE
LAC LA RONGE
Movements in late 1800's
Movements in early 1800's
Chipewyan distribution at time of white contact

Deers Lake and Portage la Loche, but by the 1840's that was considered to be an exceptional distance. By 1851, "The Athabasca 'Tinnè, named also Chepewyans, frequented the Elk and Slave Rivers, and the country westward to Hay River, which falls into Great Slave Lake."[44]

The seasonal gathering at the fort became more prolonged. The numbers of Indians who congregated for the spring rat (or muskrat) hunt increased over the 18th century, and they arrived earlier and left later. Rats were hunted at the Rocky River, Lac de Brochet, Mamawie, Quatre Fourches, Fourche de Remoux, Grand Marrais, Egg Lake, Duck Lake and Peace River. (see fig. 7). These are all between ten and 40 miles from the post, and so there were daily arrivals and departures of Indians.

Most of the Chipewyans remained relatively close to the fort all summer, to hunt for provisions. They gathered again in autumn at the plantation to be outfitted for their winter hunts. While waiting for equipment, some Indians shot geese, or trapped a little, but more frequently did nothing, so losing the most favourable period for catching the large animals.[45] In October

> "It is impossible to state the different directions they have taken as they intend for the present to Hunt muskrats, they being more numerous in the vicinity of the Lake than anywhere else and when the swamps are sufficiently frozen, they will Pitch off in search of Martens and Beavers."[46]

The places they frequented then were Lac du Brochet, Lac Clair, Jackfish River, Quatre Fourches, Hay River, Salt River or Peace River.

The Chipewyans used to rendezvous in winter on the Bark Mountains and further southwest all through the 1800's. Other winter resorts were Athabasca River, Hay River, the district around Big Island on the Peace, and the Caribou Mountains. Several Indians came to the fort about Christmas. In the 1830's they were allowed to share in the New Year's Breakfast, and

larger numbers appeared each year. Obviously this feast was the attraction, as the Indians usually departed within a few days of the feast.[47] These hangers-on were only a small portion of the main body of Indians who hunted all winter.

Like the Crees, the Chipewyans moved nearer the fort in the period of monopoly. "The principal hunting grounds of the more stationary who resort to this place have been and still continue to be on the westward and southwest of the fort."[48] They visited the fort more and stayed for longer periods, and in general discontinued their easterly circuit of Lake Athabasca.

Native Population Numbers

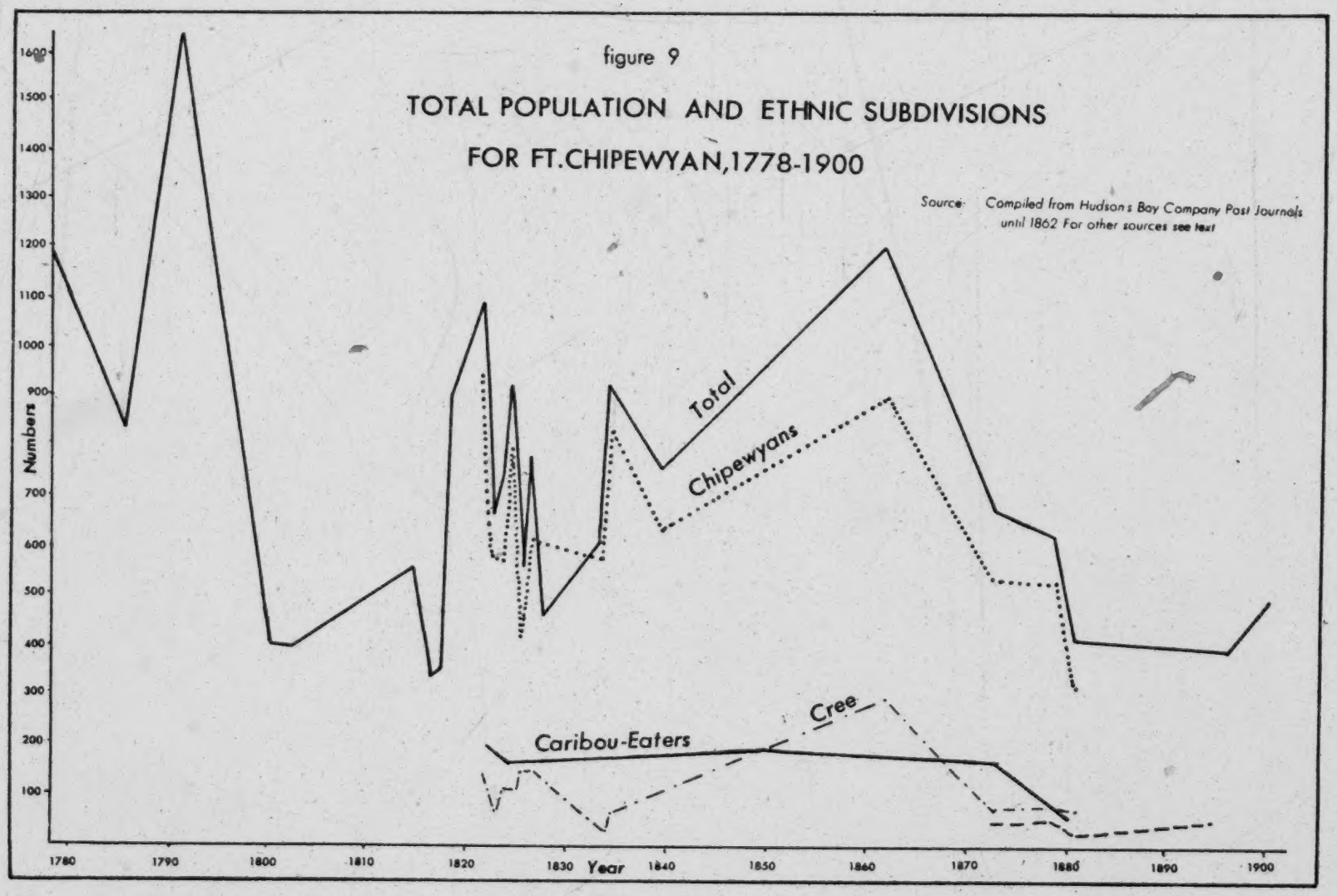
The post journals are entirely inconsistent in recording native numbers. Only three years have precise records of population. In 1823-24 the Chipewyans comprised "243 male adults, young and old, about 160 female adults, 100 boys and 90 girls," and the Crees comprised "about 16 adult males, 14 d^{o} females and about 30 children of both sexes."[49] Thus there were 593 Chipewyans and 60 Cree, including the half-breeds. In 1824-25 the Chipewyans totalled 579, the Caribou-Eaters 180 and the Crees 73, making a total of 832 Indians.[50] In 1825-26 the Chipewyan males totalled 184 and the Cree males totalled 29.[51]

It is possible, using the figures from 1823 to 1825 as guides, to roughly calculate the total population resorting to the fort. In these years, the Chipewyans outfitted amounted to only about one-fifth of the total number of Chipewyans (comparable with the earlier estimate of 5.5 people per family). The Cree hunters amounted to only one-quarter of the total Cree population. Figure 9 shows the native population for the 19th century, with the assumption that the total number of Chipewyans and Crees can be calculated by multiplying the numbers outfitted by a factor of 5

figure 9

TOTAL POPULATION AND ETHNIC SUBDIVISIONS FOR FT.CHIPEWYAN,1778-1900

Source: Compiled from Hudson's Bay Company Post Journals until 1862 For other sources see text



and 4 respectively.

The Indian population resorting to the fort fluctuated enormously, especially in the 1820's but was decreasing until about the 1830's. The population low was in 1828-29 when only 93 Chipewyans and Cree were outfitted. The maximum number of Indians would then have been 460. The population increased until the 1860's, and there were 900 Chipewyans and 300 Crees in 1862. However, the subsequent prolonged low water levels in the vicinity caused a scarcity of wildlife and so a mortal famine among the Indians, and in 1879 there were only 537 Chipewyans and 86 Crees.[52] In 1896 there were 400 residents of Fort Chipewyan, and in 1900 about 500 Indians resorted to the settlement.[53]

Sickness and Disease

Population fluctions were partly due to the migratory existence of the Indians, and partly to ill-health, starvation and disease. Traders were one of the principal contact agents to introduce often fatal diseases. Epidemics were frequent. Whether or not the natives were killed outright by them, the period of illness and weakness prevented them from hunting, trapping and fishing, and thus often proved equally fatal. Table 3-2 indicates the frequent outbreaks of sickness.

Table 3-2

Outbreaks of Sickness and Disease at Fort Chipewyan

Year	Type of Disease
1780-82	Severe Smallpox epidemic.
1803	? Great mortality in summer.
1819-20	Smallpox.
1820-21	Measles and Chincough (whooping cough).
1824	Disease.
1827	Chincough.
1828	Starving.
1833	Cholera in Montreal spreading northwest.
1835	Influenza.
1846-47	Caribou-Eaters very sick. Many dying.

Year	Type of Disease
1849-50	Starving.
1852	Starving and dying.
1853-54	Caribou-Eaters sick. Fatal.
1856	Sickness and Privation.
1860	Starving Cree.
1865	Measles and Dysentry.
1867	Sickness in summer. Influenza.
1868	Scarlet Fever.
1872	Epidemic.
1877-78	Starving.
1880	Sickness in summer.
1896	Mild influenza and sickness.
1902	Measles.
1921	Influenza, smallpox.
1930	Influenza.

The most fatal years are underlined. Source: compiled from H.B.C. Post Journals

Disease influenced population movements by causing changes in hunting grounds. In 1820

> "A most destructive malady such as that of last year has broke out in the Chipewyan lands, and carried away whole bands, and they are now dispersing in all directions hoping that a change of residence may arrest the progress of the contagion."[54]

In 1833, on hearing of cholera in Montreal, the Chipewyans obtained extra credit and moved northeast in vast numbers.[55] In 1921, Spanish 'flue' and smallpox broke out among the Caribou-Eaters who moved their hunting grounds to change their luck.[56] Similarly the death of relations caused the Indians to change their hunting grounds.

The Indians increasingly resorted to the fort when in privation, and at times caused the traders considerable annoyance. Despite the irritant of lazy families and individuals about the fort, the traders were usually sympathetic to those in need. The Indians began to rely on the traders in times of emergency and destitution, and the fort gradually became surrounded with permanent lodges. The aged and infirm regarded the fort as a place

of refuge, where more effectual aid could be provided them. Thus dependence on the traders increased beyond the trading sphere.

Native Employment

By the latter half of the 19th century, a considerable number of natives were attached to the fort, including many metis families. These half-breeds were viewed as more desirable employees by the company. "I have always had an idea that it is bad policy employing Indians except in cases of absolute necessity ... they can never be depended upon."[57] Half-breeds were employed as fort hunters, interpreters, guides, runners and boatmen from an early stage in the century.

From the 1850's onwards there are many complaints of the quality of Europeans hired to work at the trading posts. They couldn't cart fish, haul meat, carry express, or handle the boats,[58] and natives were increasingly employed in that capacity. In September, several natives were employed to carry bundles of hay to the fort from the extensive meadows on the Peace-Athabasca delta. In early October they helped take up the potatoes from the fort gardens.

Natives were employed as trip-men and made journies of several hundred miles to neighbouring posts (Great Slave Lake, Peace River, Fond du Lac and Isle a la Crosse) carrying specific goods, messages or mail. By the mid 1800's a number of native boatmen were employed to go to Cumberland House in spring and fall, and by the 1880's, were employed on the steamboats plying the Athabasca River.[59] "A good deal of employment was secured by the locals working on the freighting boats and barges. Hundreds of cords of wood had to be cut annually for the steamboats."[60] The Métis not only worked as crew and dockside hands but also owned and operated their own boats by the end of the century.[61]

FREETRADERS

The Hudson's Bay Company pioneered great improvements in transportation to the remote areas of the northwest. As early as 1867, however, one trader had realised that the very inaccessibility of the northern districts was one of the Company's greatest sources of strength.[62] These transportation improvements "were ironically enough, the very means that enabled non-company personnel interested in trading furs to take advantage of the end of the company's fur trade monopoly."[63] By the new transportation, competitors could penetrate the strongholds of the fur trade.

In the 1850's and 1860's freemen were scattered throughout the Peace River District, but it was only in 1867 that traders from British Columbia first made their appearance at Fort Chipewyan. However, their efforts were shortlived and the threat of freetraders only became a reality in the 1880's at Fort Chipewyan. As in pre-union times, traders had to visit the Indian camps to procure furs and meat. Gratuities and liquor had reappeared. The cost of furs increased, fur receipts fluctuated, and over-trapping occurred. A change in company policy was necessitated when competition was introduced. In the 1890's it moved into the spheres of retailing and general and department stores, in order to continue to function viably. Edmonton became the centre of freetraders, and was the jumping off point for many new venturers. Local firms and many individuals moved northwards. "By 1900 there were four or five stores in Chipewyan" and it was "one of the main fur trading posts" of the north.[64]

Colin Fraser was one of the most successful freetraders. He moved to Fort Chipewyan in 1893, and when he died in 1941, "owned 20 buildings at Chipewyan,"[65] besides many at other centres. In general, individuals were forced out by their limited resources and capital. When a trader

set up an outpost to obtain Indian trade, the H. B. C. also set up nearby and defeated the new attempt at trade. The increased competition resulted in a proliferation of posts near the settlement - Jack Fish Lake, Poplar Point, Hay River, Fond du Lac, Cassiar Creek and Stoney Rapids near Slave River. (see fig. 7).

The total impact of the freetraders on the natives is difficult to assess. However, from them, the natives learned that returns for furs at Edmonton were greater than at Chipewyan "and every year a party of them, led by some freeman ... visits the outside world."[66] Thus contact with outsiders was stimulated.

> "There was much competition in them days [1917] ... Everyone was trying to beat the other. The times were good in them days. Furs were plentiful and market prices were good and these good times lasted about three years. Credits were limited and everybody was rich."[67]

One direct result of the fur trade was that natives spent more time and energy trapping, and less time hunting caribou or fishing. With such an undiversified economy "they lived within a more tenuous economic system."[68] They increasingly desired the traded goods available at the posts and came to rely upon them, and so had to trap almost exclusively. They necessarily deprived themselves of the opportunity to acquire basic foods. Thus in times of hardship they were faced with starvation. The economic life of the native became inextricably linked with trapping and the H. B. C., for it was only at the fort that furs could be exchanged for the items required. By the late 19th century and early 20th century traders encouraged the building of houses, the cultivation of gardens, and a more settled life, and a growing nucleus of people began to settle around the fort.

Co-operation with the Indians was essential for the continued success of the trade. In this respect the natives were not, in fact, entirely dependent upon Europeans. " ... they can never be rendered dependant

... from the obvious circumstance of their having their lands to resort to ..."[69] Had they ever carried out their threats to "retire to their lands," the trade would have been finished in the Athabasca district.

However, they did not want to give up the European goods to which they had become accustomed, and chose to continue in the trade and so to change their way of life. This change, involving greater concentration at one place, and increasing emphasis on trapping at the expense of hunting, was not a direct result of a colonial-type exploitation by the fur traders, as suggested by McCormack.[70] It was a life-style chosen by the Indians in order to obtain the benefits they perceived this way of life to hold for them.

Footnotes

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2. A. Mackenzie. Voyages from Montreal throughout the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793, Toronto, 1911, Vol. 2. Intro. pp. xii-xiii.

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4. W. McGillivray, "Some Account of the Trade Carried on by the North West Company," 1809, in Report for the Year 1828 of the Public Archives of Canada, Appendix E, p. 60.

5. G. Bryce, The Makers of Canada: Exploration and Settlement of the Great West. Vol. 9. Mackenzie, Selkirk, Simpson, Douglas, Oxford University Press, London and Toronto, 1926, pp. 24, 21.

6. McGillivray, op.cit., pp. 67, 68.

7. D. Jenness (ed.) "The Chipewyan Indians: an account by an early explorer." Anthropologica, Vol. 3, 1956, p. 17.

8. Tyrrell(ed.), Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor between the years 1771 and 1792, Toronto, 1934, p. 451.

9. This assumption is based on McGillivray's calculation of 350 families being 2,000 souls in 1809, i.e. 5·42 per family, op.cit., p. 67.

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13. Nottingham House Post Journals, 1802, B 39/a/1.

14. Ibid, 19 Oct. 1803.

15. The Beaver Indians occasionally threatened the Chipewyans, and in 1804 the Chipewyans fled from the wrath of the N.W.C. after killing 8 of their men.

16. E.E. Rich (ed.) Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report. Toronto, 1936; p. 355.

17. Ibid, p. 124.

18. Jenness, op.cit., p. 17.

19. Rich, op.cit, p. 356.

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21. Rich, op.cit., p. 396.

22. J. Helm and E.B. Leacock, "The Hunting Tribes of Subarctic Canada" in E. Leacock and N.O. Lurie, North American Indians in Historical Perspective, New York, 1971, p. 350.

23. McGillivray, op.cit., p. 62.

24. A.S. Morton, op.cit., p. 308.

25. H. B. C. Report on the District, 1825-26, B 39/e/9.

26. Ibid.

27. Rich, op.cit, p. 75.

28. H. B. C. Fort Chipewyan Post Journals, March 2, 1835, B 39/a/30.

29. H. B. C. Report on the District, 1825-26, B 39/e/9.

30. J. Mackenzie in L.F. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Quest, Quebec, 1889, p. 378.

31. Nottingham House Post Journals, B 39/a/1; B 39/a/4; B39/a/59.

32. Fort Chipewyan Post Journals, Sept. 24, 1818, B 39/a/4; B 39/a/8; Rich, op.cit., p. 121.

33. H. B. C. Report on the District, 1823-24, B 39/e/6.

34. H. B. C. Fort Chipewyan Post Journals, B 39/a/27; B 39/a/44[a]; B 39/a/46.

35. Ibid., Aug. 7, 1802, B 39/a/1.,

36. Ibid., May 26, 1932, B 39/a/28; May 23, 1835, B 39/a/30.

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39. Ibid., Nov. 6, 1834, B 39/a/30; Nov. 2, 1837, B 39/a/34.

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42. Ibid., Dec. 27, 1850, B 39/b/12.

43. Rich, op.cit., p. 69.

44. J. Richardson, Arctic Searching Expedition, Vol. 2, London, 1851, p. 4.

45. H. B. C. Fort Chipewyan Post Journals, Sept. 18, 1825, B 39/a/24.

46. Ibid., Oct. 5, 1826, B 39/a/25.

47. Ibid., Dec. 27, 1866; Jan. 3, 1867, B 39/a/45.

48. H. B. C. Report on the District, 1825-26, B 39/e/9.

49. Ibid., 1823-24, B 39/e/6.

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51. Ibid., 1825-26, B 39/e/9.

52. Petitot, op.cit. p. 51.

53. C. Whitney, On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds, New York, 1896, p. 87; F. Fraser as told to A.E. Peterson, "A Fur Trader of the North," Alta. Hist. Review, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1956, p. 20.

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70. P.A. McCormack, A Colonial Factory: Fort Chipewyan, Hons. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1969.

CHAPTER IV

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

Early Missionary Contact

All the early missionaries were keen to proselytise amongst the natives of Canada. Dumoulin, based in St. Boniface, had heard of the great potential for gaining converts around Lake Athabasca, and in 1821, suggested to his superior, Bishop Plessis, that a missionary should be placed in the Athabasca District.[1] By the time he received permission to go northwest, he had already been requested by both the N. W. C. and H. B. C. to go to Lake Athabasca.

> "It seems that for their own interests, the two companies would be willing to pay all expenses, for the Indians have been asking ever since we came here to see the children of God, that is, the priests."[2]

The H. B. C. pioneered and developed transportation routes into the northwest, and the missionaries took advantage of these routes as well as of the Company boats, to obtain access to the North. They also built their missions near the trading posts where food and ammunition were available to them gratis. "Si nos missions existent, c'est en grande partie à l'honorable Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson que nous le devons."[3]

Sunday worship had been conducted by the H. B. C. Factor at Fort Chipewyan since 1823, but it was 1842 before the first missionary, a Wesleyan, arrived. He stayed for less than a month but was well received by the post employees and the natives. Deschambeault recorded

> "Today Divine Service was performed by the Revd. Mr. Evans, at which all but four of the people attended, as also the Crees and their families who seemed to be much impressed and affected at the preaching through the Interpretation of Thos. Hassel."[4]

The natives apparently became keen to have a resident missionary after Evans' visit. The factor questioned them specifically on this point. "They all appeared desirous of embracing Christianity and of the Mifsionaries coming among them, particularly the Chipewyans who approved very much of the preposal (sic)."[5] It was not until five years later that a missionary visited them. Taché, a Roman Catholic, spent four weeks at Fort Chipewyan en route to Fort Resolution, and stayed four months on his return. Faraud was sent to Fort Chipewyan in 1849, and from that time a continuous succession of priests remained stationed at the mission.

In 1874, the Grey Nuns founded the convent of the Holy Angels and a school at the mission, because "le bishop protestant, Reeves, venait s'établir au lac Athabaska, avec deux mâitres d'école."[6] The Roman Catholics felt it was imperative to outflank the Protestants with a Catholic school. It was 1867 before an Anglican, Bompas, remained at Fort Chipewyan for any length of time. St. Paul's Anglican Mission was founded, and it too, has had almost continuous occupancy until the present day.

Native Attitudes to the Missionary

The natives responded enthusiastically to the missionaries' preachings. There were many instances of Sabbath observance. The post journalist recorded

> "the day otherwise pafsed in quietnefs, and tranquility, no Indians even presuming to ask for a pipe of tobacco which is worthy of remark as it shows what an effect the little they have heard of Religion and things concerning their eternal welfare has made upon their minds, for the few with whom I have conversed, upon the subject of Religion seemed very desirous of being instructed and embrasing (sic) Christianity."[7]

When a Roman Catholic at Isle ala Crosse promised to go to Athabasca in 1848, "Les Montagnais d'Athabaska passèrent tout l'été dans l'attente

mais en vain."[8] The next year the Indians, in expectation of Taché's arrival spent all summer in the neighbourhood of the fort waiting for him. Although they were fowling when he came, "they laid their guns aside, and left themselves entirely in the hands of the man of prayer during the few weeks which he spent among them."[9] It is difficult to determine whether the transformations found in the natives were due to an understanding of religious principles, or due to their obedient natures. Anderson talks of the success of the missionaries among the natives "who being most biddable and docile creatures receive everything that is told them most implicitly."[10]

The missionaries themselves seemed to be fairly satisfied with the natives' reaction to them and their rapid improvements. "Ils n'ont pas les défauts communs aux autres tribus. Ansi ils ne sont enclins ni au vol, ni aux supersitions et sorcelleries."[11] The natives' desire for religious instruction persisted for decades.

> "The Indians are constantly asking for syllabic instruction - books, BIBLES, portions, etc. About 30 anxious men have gone away empty and disappointed because we have no more SYLLABIC BIBLES, etc. Nearly all the Indians read the syllabic characters."[12]

Most of the Indians were Roman Catholics, yet were always keen to visit the Anglican mission to talk. However, the talks usually occurred at the same time as the administration of medicine. Few Indians left the Catholic faith. Despite their favourable attitude towards the missionaries and desire to do as the missionaries taught, the natives did not fully understand the difference between the two denominations in Fort Chipewyan. They believed that " ... la religion catholique, c'est la religion de Français, la religion protestant, celle des Anglais."[13] They followed the Catholic faith as they had first been instructed, but were open to influence by the Anglicans. Lefroy aptly noted that "the Indians of course knew nothing of the question, and

looked upon it precisely as they do on the disputes of their medicine men. He whose medicine is the strongest gets the victory."[14]

Open hostility existed between the two religious groups and intense jealousy was felt when one denomination won over a native. The hostilities were exaggerated by the ill-feeling of the residents of the Post who were mostly Protestants, towards the Roman Catholics.[15] Thus, the Anglicans expressed concern about the effect of the rivalry. "There is great danger that the Indians, being sought both by Priests and Ministers, who mutually cavil at one another, become at last careless and suspicious of both."[16]

Spatial Changes Resulting Directly from Missionary Contact

The enthusiasm which the natives had for the missionaries did not cause revolutionary spatial changes in their life cycle, but certain minor changes in their economic activities did result. When Taché visited Fort Chipewyan in 1847, 1,000 Chipewyans and 100 Crees completely ceased their fowling to listen to him.[17] The next year, in the hope of seeing a priest, "Plusieurs des Mangeurs de Caribous avaient contre leur habitude passé L'été auprès du fort."[18] Other Indians who normally resorted to the posts farther north also came.[19] The Caribou-Eaters used to come in contact with many of their tribe who resorted to Fort Churchill, where there was a protestant minister. They persuaded the Churchill Indians to come to Athabasca to hear the priest.[20]

The missionary had to make good use of the short time the Indians spent at the trading post, especially in the early years of contact. The Indians usually visited for a couple of nights in fall and a few weeks in spring. The missionaries were aware that "il faut profiter de ces précieux et courts moments pour leur parler."[21] They also taught the Indians

by going out to their camps and spending some time there. The remotest Indians in the Diocese lived about 250 miles[22] from Fort Chipewyan to the northeast, which made camp visiting a difficult proposition.

The Roman Catholic priests were especially active in this respect, eg. in 1854 Grollier visited the Fond du Lac post, to preach to the Caribou-Eaters and he repeated this journey several times before an outpost Mission was built. Many of the posts which the Oblates visited were up to 150-200 and even 400 kilometres away.[23] In the 1890's, Mercredi remembered that "priests were making long trips with dogs to see sick people in far away camps with (sic) all kinds of weather."[24] The Roman Catholics had an advantage over the Anglicans in that their mission staff was much larger. The priests could easily leave the mission hospital, orphanage, church and school, in the hands of the sisters and brothers.

The fact that the missionaries journeyed to the camps did not necessarily encourage the Indians to remain in the bush. The missionaries visited those who could not make it to the fort at that particular time, through sickness, or trapping activities. The natives were certainly encouraged by the clergy to visit the settlement more frequently. It was feared that settlement life would corrupt the natives, however, and only short visits based around the mission were encouraged. This was a different attitude from that of the traders, who felt that the natives had no good economic reason for staying long periods and so discouraged this.

In 1857, the factor complained

> "Equipped a few Indians today, all that have come in have been now arranged but they cling about the mission and allow the fine weather to slip bye without availing of it to reach their intended hunting grounds."[25]

The result was that the native was "encouraged to come to the fort to trade and spend some time in the religious and social festivities; he then was

expected to return to the trap lines."[26]

The presence of the missionary provided a greater incentive for the natives to come more frequently to the fort. In 1855, old men journeyed for seven days specifically to visit Grollier.

> "Si je n'avais été la, ils se seraient contentés d'envoyer leurs jeunes gens, pour traiter avec les agents de la compagnie; mais ils souhaitaient ardement recevoir de nouveau la sainte communion, à laquelle je les avais admis, au printemps précédent."[27]

The Indians came to the fort for events celebrated by the missionaries, such as the coming of the Bishop, for holy days and festivals, such as Midnight Mass on Christmas eve. They gradually stayed for longer periods as well.

Native Health, Education and Welfare

The missionaries introduced new elements into the life of the natives, which indirectly affected their movement and settlement patterns. The missionary "had to be physician, teacher, judge, social worker, preacher, translator, linguist, fund-raiser, and trainer of other clergy."[28] This echoes an earlier missionary's words.

> "In these desolate wilds, the gospel must be known by its fruits .... A missionary here ought to be either a schoolteacher, a farmer or a doctor or else endeavour to combine all three with the preaching of the gospel."[29]

One of the most important functions of the missionary was that of doctor. Natives who were old, sick or starving came to the mission for aid. Although the Indians were mostly Roman Catholics

> "The Indians come to us [Anglicans] in sickness as they have no faith in the small pilules (homeopathic) administered by the priests. This circumstance alone has presented hundreds of opportunities of spreading the glad tidings ...."[30]

While the Anglican records repeatedly mention that great numbers of natives visited the Mission for medicine, the Roman Catholic establishment was more effectively organized with respect to the health care of the natives. The sisters looked after the sick from the 1870's and in 1905, a graduate nurse joined the Grey Nuns. The mission soon had invalid rooms for women, and a dispensary where free medicine was given to all who required it. The nurse would travel for two or three days to visit the sick, and continued these services until the 1960's. Since such varied health services were available, natives with any disorder stayed longer at the settlement until they had received sufficient treatment. Others were induced to come to the settlement for care when previously there would have been little incentive.

The instruction of native children in the Catholic faith was a prime objective of the Roman Catholics. Within eight days of their arrival in Fort Chipewyan, the Grey Nuns had established a school for 15 children.[31] Bompas was also a great advocate of education within the Anglican church. "In a dark and ignorant country like this, I take but little interest in missionary work, apart from that of education."[32] When the Anglicans arrived in Fort Chipewyan, a day school was built by the minister who cared for five pupils. The Roman Catholics again had the advantage in that the sisters could spend most of their time in instruction, while the priests and brothers looked after other aspects of the mission.

Since the Roman Catholics provided a residence for the children of trappers who lived at great distances from the settlement, their school was attractive to the natives. Some natives learnt to play one denomination against the other, by "promising" their children to either school. One asked Lucas to take his two children into the Anglican school

> "I told him I should be glad if he could find 100 fish for winter for each child. As soon as I mentioned that, he got up and said that he could take them across to the Roman Catholics as the priest had asked him for them. Being desirous of retaining the children, I said no more about work and thus the matter rests."[33]

The Roman Catholic residential school meant that the natives could continue in their way of life. At the same time it created a positive draw to the settlement for natives who wished to visit their children, and prolonged the period when they camped in Fort Chipewyan. Although the children were encouraged to return to the wilderness, they were intensively subjected to another culture. They learnt skills other than those required to earn a living in the bush, and could perceive certain advantages in settlement life.

The missionaries generated a certain amount of employment for natives in the settlement. Bompas believed in native participation in all spheres, thus there was a native catechist aiding the Anglican missionary. The Anglicans also employed natives as domestics for the mission, church organist, laundry women, and school, church and general helps. The Roman Catholics also employed local people to help them. By 1958, their help amounted to three men, five married women and four girls.[34]

Associated with attempts to improve the natives spiritually and morally, was the task of "civilizing" them, by improving their material condition so that their lives would be more meaningful within the missionaries' framework of thinking. They gradually accumulated a leadership role over the natives, who lacked any great degree of involvement in decisions which directly affected them. But at least by articulating the needs of the natives, the missionaries "were instrumental in drawing Canada to extend its authority over a primitive land."[35]

The presence of the clergy furthered the process of cultural

convergence which was started by the fur traders. The natives gathered at the fort more frequently as proselytization increased, and remained around the post and mission for longer periods. They made short visits at various times of the year on holy days, festivals, or Sundays which would have reduced the areal extent of their hunting grounds. Although no new patterns of spatial activity dramatically emerged, the nodal function of the trading post was strengthened by the presence of the missionaries close to the fort.

Footnotes

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17. Taché, op.cit.

18. Loc.cit., emphasis, the author.

19. Loc.cit.

20. Ortolan, op.cit., p. 190.

21. Faraud, op.cit., p. 108.

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23. Ortolan, op.cit., p. 249.

24. A.V. Mercredi, This Book will Tell you the Years of My Life in Fort Chipewyan, the Place I was Born and Lived all my Life. unpub., 1962, p. 4, A.V.M.

25. H. B. C. Fort Chipewyan Post Journals, Oct. 5, 1857, B 39/a/44[a].

26. Carney, op.cit., p. 29.

27. Grollier, in Ortolan, op.cit., p. 192.

28. M. Zaslow, The opening of The Canadian North 1820-1914, Toronto/ Montreal, 1972, p. 72.

29. W.C. Bompas to the Committee, Aug. 20, 1877, C.M.S. c1/c1/0.

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32. W.C. Bompas, July 6, 1871, C.M.S., c1/M8/.

33. Lucas, June 12, 1896, A.A. A281/192.

34. Holy Angels Year Book, 1958-59, A.A. A2.

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CHAPTER V

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

Native Administration

Jurisdiction of Indian Affairs until 1867 was with the British Government, but effective government was carried out by the fur traders during that period. By Royal Charter, the Hudson's Bay Company had the power to make laws and act in a judicial capacity for and in the chartered territories. The H. B. C. council members were concerned about native welfare and had a responsible, if paternalistic viewpoint. The clergy also took an active role in keeping law and order. "I have had three cases since you passed through, two Indians, one for fire and the other for theft. And a trapper for drunkenness and obsene language."[1] In 1867, the British North America Act placed the administration of Indian affairs with the new Government of Canada. In 1880, the Indian Act was passed and is still the basic legislation pertaining to Indian rights to this time. Thus, the Indians of Fort Chipewyan "were brought more closely under the political controls of the nation without ever having signed a treaty."[2]

Although the Canadian Government had official control over the natives, Carney noted that the whites who entered the northern regions after 1867, whether police, entrepreneurs, or civil servants, accepted "almost without reservation, the sovereignity of the fur posts and mission stations over the native people."[3] It was not until the late 1890's, when gold was found in the Yukon, and the Klondike Gold Rush began, that the government was given the incentive to legally claim the north.

Treaty Number 8, 1899

> "De toutes parts des multitudes d'étrangers arrivées; des compagnies se formaient, réunissaient des capitaux, envoyaient des explorateurs, des ingénieurs, des experts des mineurs ....

> Tout cela obligeait le gouvernement à établir un système quelconque d'administration. C'est pourquoi il s'était décidé a` traiter avec les Indiens du Nord."[4]

The Indians at Fort Chipewyan were initially reluctant to sign treaty 8 which covered the Athabasca and Peace River districts. (see fig. 10) They were anxious to retain full hunting, fishing and trapping privileges, and freedom to send their children to Roman Catholic schools. The commissioners reassured the Indians of their freedom of choice in life-style. However, it is McCormack's opinion that a clause in the Treaty revealed a

> "basic assumption that Indians in the Athabasca district would never aspire to other 'non-Indian' vocations. Further, this clause ensured the maintenance of the status quo by formalizing by treaty, the Indians role as hunter. Within this legal context, the Indian would find it difficult to change his role should he so desire."[5]

The commissioners' report indicates the same attitude about the role of the native, and this viewpoint continued for 50 years and had profound implications on government contact with the natives.

The Provincial government[6] was reluctant to assume responsibility for the natives who had signed Treaty 8. Little more than the minimum treaty provisions were undertaken. Thus Carney felt that the natives' "traditional" role was further strengthened.

> "The State's passive role tended to convince both fur traders and missionary that the limited social horizons they had in mind for the native people were appropriate and sufficient. If the situation was to change so that the native people could take part in the social, economic and political developments ... it would require a complete reversal of attitudes on the part of the government and its agent in the district."[7]

In 1899, the Half-breed Commission went to Fort Chipewyan to offer the Métis 240 acre land scrips (location tickets) or $ 240.00 cash scrips. Of the persons treated with, in 1899, 96% received money scrips. "A short

figure 10

BOUNDARIES OF TREATY NO. 8
DOG RIBS
YELLOW KNIVES
CHIPEWYANS
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
CARIBOU
SLAVES
SLAVES
CHIPEWYANS
MANITOBA
DOG RIBS
BRITISH COLUMBIA
SLAVES
TREATY No. 8
BEAVERS
CHIPEWYANS
ATHABASCA
CREES
SICANNIES
CREES
BEAVERS
SASKATCHEWAN
CREES
IROQUOIS
ALBERTA
N
0 20 100 Mls
Source Report of the Commissioners for Treaty 8 September 1899

spending spree, in many cases, was the only benefit the Metis secured from the government largesse."[8]

Spatial Implications of the Treaty

One of the clauses of Treaty 8 stipulated that an annual payment of cash would be made to the Indians - $ 25.00 to the Chief, $ 15.00 to the Headmen, and $ 5.00 to each family head, and as much ammunition and twine for making nets as would amount to $ 1.00 for each family head. The cash and other payments were in reality, token amounts, but their yearly distribution plus the presence of a doctor in the treaty party, resulted in a new and definite spatial trend. All the natives gathered annually at the fort for the treaty distributions in late June or July.[9]

The Government treaty with the natives had important spatial implications in that the native movement patterns were altered to accomodate the yearly concentration at the fort in whatever month the officials should prescribe. Not only this, but the distance which it was possible for them to travel in summer was reduced, since the gatherings at Fort Chipewyan were now spaced quite evenly throughout the year.

> " ... The far greater proportion live the Nomadic or Camp life of their Ancestors. Coming into the Fort only two or three times a year, usually at Christmas and Easter when they bring in their Fox and Muskrat catch respectively, and for the Annual treaty payment which is paid here in July."[10]

Increasing Contact with Outsiders

In 1899, The Royal North West Mounted Police was the first permanent official government agency to be established in Fort Chipewyan. There were never more than two or three permanent officers stationed there, but they patrolled the area around Lake Athabasca and Peace River and even went as far as Fort Simpson on occasion. They kept track of the influx of outsiders

from the south, a large group of which were the surveyors and official explorers. They described the country and mapped it in order to assist future development. They did not directly influence the activities of the native population, but they did map, and open the way for subsequent visitors, such as game hunters, trappers, scientists and even tourists and settlers.

In the early 20th century, white trappers began to set up lines around Fort Chipewyan. They were largely responsible for the scarcity of wildlife. They trapped for personal profit and could move out of the district when furs became scarce. In order to combat the depletion of animals provincial legislation introduced trapping seasons, banned the sale of game, and issued licenses to hunters and trappers. However, this did not eliminate the threat of the white trappers, but did adversely affect the natives through closed seasons. No precise numbers are available, but in the 1920's there were near Fort Chipewyan "many white trappers" who "intimidated Indians who trap in their Districts."[11]

The Chipewyan chief complained in 1928 about the deteriorating trapping situation. He wanted his band to be allocated the reserve promised at Treaty 8, to prevent white trappers from trespassing on Indian ratting grounds.

> "The strangers from outside are taking all our best hunting grounds from us, and they do not allow the Indians to hunt near these ... a good many Chips of my band cannot find any place to trap rats ... these white trappers take the [Indian] traps away and set their own traps there ..."[12]

This one group of outsiders, the white trappers, had considerable impact on the natives by preventing them from trapping certain areas and by encroaching on their lines. This had a restrictive effect on the natives' economic activities and resulted, amongst other things, in a reserve being given to the Chipewyans, who therefore became more spatially restricted

within its boundaries.

Spatial Implications of Health and Education Developments

The missionaries were the main source of health care for the natives. However, medical care was grossly inadequate, the treatment being curative rather than preventative, and mortality rates remained extremely high until quite recently. Roman Catholic records indicate the severity of the problem.

> "P. lost 1st wife and 15 [of 17] children, all apparently died of T.B. or some other infectious illness of a T.B. character ... L. ... lost 10 of 11 children, all died of T.B. or similar ... F. lost 10 of 14 children, all of T.B. ... A. lost wife and all [5] children of T.B. ... T. All 4 children lost in 1931 of T.B. ... In 1930, out of 29 deaths recorded in our register, 23 were caused by T.B. or T.B. meningitis; In 1931, 25 deaths, 23 by T.B. or T.B. meningitis."[13]

The initial reaction of the government to native health problems was to provide a medicine chest for each band and a doctor to accompany the Indian Agent in his annual treaty visits. The services of a doctor were available in the settlement during the 1930's but were discontinued and a doctor was flown in from Fort Smith, two to three times a year in the 1950's and every two weeks in the 1960's. In 1961, a nursing station was established in Fort Chipewyan where treatment, health care and advice was available from the two resident nurses. Although these improvements in medical care have been slow, extending over 70 years, they should not be underestimated as a factor which has helped attract the natives to the settlement at first in times of need, and eventually as a place of permanent residence.

Schooling was conducted by the missionaries for several decades before the treaty guaranteed education facilities. The government response was to subsidize the Roman Catholic and Anglican schools already in operation. Church and state authorities agreed that hunting and trapping was the

inevitable way of life for most natives, so the boarding school system was favoured, since the nomadic natives did not have a permanent residence in the settlement. However, others felt that the boarding system was not suitable for the Fort Chipewyan natives since the children would be unable to survive in the bush after leaving school.[14] Thus, there was a basic conflict between the officials' long term viewpoint of the natives as nomadic trappers and hunters, and their conviction that boarding schools were the best system of education.

The process of education in a residential school had a negative influence on the childrens' desire to follow their parents way of life, by intensively exposing them to a different life-style. The parents were not keen to send their children to a residential school because of the strong kinship and economic ties of the family unit in the bush.[15] They were therefore unwilling to send healthy children to residential school, and far less to actually settle in the town and send their children to day school.

As school subsidies increased throughout the 20th century, so the degree of state control increased proportionately. In 1945, a Public School district was created to educate the non-Catholic population. Although it secularized education for the non-Catholics, it did not help the larger proportion of Catholic non-treaty natives, who were ineligible for free education. In 1945, of the 72 metis families, only eight had employment which raised them above the poverty level, sufficiently to send their children to school. The other 107 metis children of school age could not be educated because of lack of funds.[16]

In 1945, the Family Allowance Act was passed. Indian parents received this allowance for each school-age child who attended school or received equivalent training. This meant that parents could choose to

send their children to school or keep them, as they pleased, and still receive the allowance. Destitute families that might previously have sent their children to residential school, would now be losing the economic aid of the children in the bush, and a principal source of cash income, if they sent their children to school.

The Family Allowance Act certainly did not increase school attendance initially since the parents received greater benefit by keeping their children and the allowance.

> "Les gens ne veulent pas mettre leurs enfants à l'école ... l'allocation familiale pour les Indiens a été de nature à nuire au recrutement de l'école, les gens desirent garder leurs enfants chez eux, pour pouvoir avoir cette allocation."[17]

The substantive maintenance regulation had a negative effect on school attendance, but the allowance system was deliberately structured in that way. The policy makers still clung to their view of natives in traditional roles. They realised that insisting upon school attendance would lead to settlement residence.

The Anglican school unfortunately, had no residence, and so was not able to cater for the children of nomadic parents. It was not until 1930 that a schoolteacher took the place of the minister in teaching the handful of pupils. The number of pupils at the Roman Catholic school steadily increased to over 300 in the 20th century, with the largest increases in the 1950's and 1960's. The number of day pupils increased rapidly from the 1950's, indicating that many more natives had begun to live in the settlement. There were also however, large numbers of absentee pupils, especially during the spring trapping and fall fishing periods,[18] indicating that settlement residence was far from permanent. Nevertheless, the trend towards settlement residence had begun and was increasing.

Money Economy Introduced: Increased Contact with New Life Style

Increasing government activity throughout the 20th century resulted in more frequent visits of federal and provincial personnel to the settlement. Since the steamer called at Fort Chipewyan, large numbers of non-native people passed through the settlement on their way north, especially after the building of the railway from Edmonton to Fort McMurray in 1921 - hunters, trappers, traders, missionaries, boatmen, builders, doctors, teachers and prospectors. No figures are available, but the numbers were certainly relatively large, as Zaslow indicated.[19]

Government parties hired local people to help them in their work, providing some degree of local employment. From 1901 there were a number of official postal services each year between Edmonton and Fort Resolution. These were made by steamer in summer and by dog team in winter and provided substantial incomes for those who had contracts to carry the mail.

Float 'planes provided the first direct means of contact with the 'outside.' Western Canadian Airlines provided a service to Fort Chipewyan from 1929. Other companies also served the settlement for short periods. Air rate reductions in the 1930's and 1940's made air travel increasingly feasible and increased contact with outsiders. In 1946, Canadian Pacific Airways hired a Fort Chipewyan native as their agent until 1952 when it closed operations in the settlement.

In 1936, gold was found in the Athabasca area at Beaver Lodge (now Goldfields) on the north shore of Lake Athabasca. The years prior to that had seen the economic depression hit Fort Chipewyan badly, especially since there had also been a scarcity of furs in the 1930's. The possibility of easy money was very attractive to the natives, and many joined the Gold Rush by making secretive trips to stake claims in the hope of a lucky strike.[20] Others had jobs at or near the mines but these were probably

guiding or transporting supplies. In the 1950's there were only about one dozen families from Fort Chipewyan still living there.[21]

Employment opportunities and possibilities of wealth associated with contact with the outside, reinforced the money economy introduced in 1899 with the treaty payments. By the second decade of the 20th century, the trading term Made Beaver[22] had completely disappeared and furs were calculated in dollars and cents. Times were good about 1920 and nearly every native possessed a 'kicker' or motorboat.[23]

The attractions of a steady source of money were very strong for the natives who wished to have a more stable income than the trapping life afforded. However, jobs were difficult to obtain in the settlement 50 years ago.

> "The unemployed of Chipewyan ask for consideration of their application for positions in the Warden Service of the Wood Buffalo Park, instead of importing men from outside to fill vacancies in the Park Service, as is the custom at Present ... and some ask for any 'odd job' that might be available."[24]

Temporary jobs were the only option.

> "the native settlement dweller relied on occasional jobs as interpreter, guide, or labourer, supplementing this income with brief hunting or fishing trips away from the post .... Once he had experienced the relative comfort of settlement living, he was reluctant to return to the isolated and harsh existence of the wilderness."[25]

Until a few years ago, it was still true that trapping provided the major source of income for the majority of the residents of Fort Chipewyan. However, the natives increasingly were attracted to the settlement as a place of residence all through the 20th century. It provided a central place for facilities and services, and since trapping was not done in very distant areas, the natives could use the settlement as a base. It may

have been that the natives obtained cash from trapping of necessity, since the previous section shows the unemployment problems in Fort Chipewyan and the unsound economic base of the community. However, they found the settlement attractive, despite the unemployment problems, and a new pattern of permanent residence was established.

Footnotes

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3. R.J. Carney, Relations in Education between the Federal and Territorial Governments and the Roman Catholic Church in the Mackenzie District, Northwest Territories, 1867-1961, Unpub. PhD thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1971, p. 1.

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16. Report on the Métis Families of Fort Chipewyan, Feb. 21, 1945, A.V.M.

17. Picard to Mgr. Trocellier, Oct. 18, 1945, A.V.M.

18. Holy Angels Year Book, 1958-59, A.A. A.2.

19. Zaslow, op.cit., pp. 236-241.

20. Author uncertain, A.A. A420/13b, n.d.

21. Mousseau to Trocellier, Dec. 12, 1950, A.V.M.

22. 'Made Beaver' was a trading unit of value applicable to both furs and store goods. An item valued at two Made Beaver was worth two prime beaver skins.

23. Author uncertain, A.A. A420/13b, n.d.

24. Bishop to Minister of the Interior, Dec, 12, 1920, A.V.M.

25. Carney, op.cit., p. 29.

CHAPTER VI

PHYSICAL EVOLUTION OF THE SETTLEMENT

The First Trading Posts

The first post in the Athabasca District was Pond's Fort, established in 1778 on the banks of the Athabasca River, just beyond the point where the Embarras River branches west, and some 40 miles from the lake. At that site, the traders could obtain food throughout the winter, there being an abundance of moose and deer nearby. The fort was located on the main north-south water route, and there were good trade prospects with the Indians who passed by the fort on their way to Isle ala Crosse.

Cuthbert Grant's journal reveals that in 1786 this fort comprised a two-storied mens' house and proprietor's house and a fenced garden, and there were intentions of building another house that summer.

> "30 April ... all the people in the garrets. 1 May In less than half an hour we had four feet of water above the floor of the houses & many large pieces of Ice floating about the houses, all the wood Which Mr. Pond had squired & Drawn for to Build a house this Summer is gon a Drift and all the Garden fence, all the loggs we put before the fort went a Drift, also the Partitions in Mr. Pond's house raised part of the Ground floor. This went up and down for a few days."[1]

Alexander Mackenzie, in charge of the Athabasca trade in 1787-88, realised that if a rendezvous could be established near Lake Athabasca, it would be better placed to draw the Chipewyans into trade.[2] The site chosen in 1788 for the first Fort Chipewyan was six miles east of the easternmost arm of the Athabasca River, on what is now called Old Fort Point. Blanchet shows the site to be on the northeast tip of the peninsula,[3] but Parker said "the fort was built on the west side of the point, where it was sheltered from the east winds blowing off the lake."[4] This may be explained since the Old Fort Point post had been rebuilt twice since Mackenzie's

time, neither post on the original site.[5] It appears from Fidler's sketches, that the first post was built on the western shore as Parker indicated (see fig. 11).

A decade later, Fort Chipewyan was relocated. Mackenzie's explorations had revealed great potential trading areas to the north and west of Lake Athabasca which would be more accessible from a depot on the northwest shore of the lake. The shortest branches of the Athabasca River were at the western side of its delta, and it was logical to eliminate the longer eastern route via Old Fort Point, and to continue to a central post near the northwest exit from the lake.

The timing of freeze-up and break-up were important to the fur traders. The channels between the Peace River and Lake Athabasca normally flow into the Peace River except when the Peace is in flood when they reverse their direction. This phenomenon effects an early break-up in the northwest part of the lake, which meant that vital provisions could be brought into Fort Chipewyan from the Peace River area by canoe. Similarly outgoing brigades from the Peace and Mackenzie Departments could bring their furs into Fort Chipewyan to be sorted and repacked, ready to go south as soon as the lake broke up. Parker pointed out that at the Old Fort, ice flows were an obstacle to canoe activity, since ice was pushed against Old Fort Point both by east and west winds.[6]

A decisive factor in relocation was that the new site was more convenient to the Indians with whom the N. W. C. was trading. The majority of Chipewyans inhabited the lands to the north and east of Lake Athabasca and their main gathering grounds were on the north shore of the lake. Pointe au Sable was " ... a piece of land where the Indians always encamped ..."[7] (see fig. 12). "The Indian camps extended from Pointe aux Sables to beyond the Little Island with the rugged Dog's Head beyond."[8]

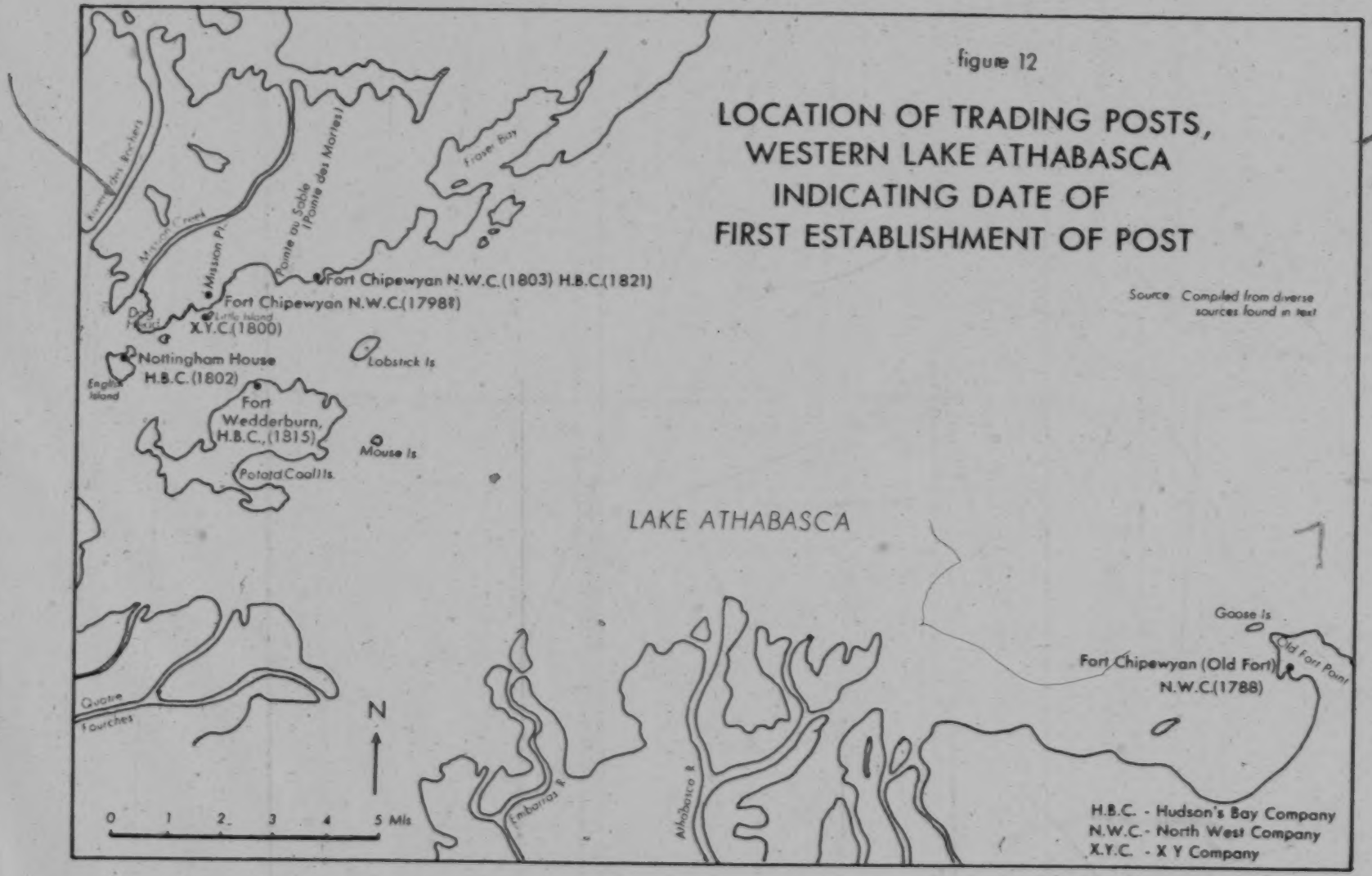
figure 11

WESTERN LAKE ATHABASCA, COMPILED FROM PETER FIDLER'S SKETCHES

Source: Hudson's Bay Company Archives E 3/1

figure 12

LOCATION OF TRADING POSTS, WESTERN LAKE ATHABASCA INDICATING DATE OF FIRST ESTABLISHMENT OF POST



Source Compiled from diverse sources found in text

The date of the move to the north shore is not exactly known, but suggestions that it was in 1804 are several years late. Blanchet suggested the move was 1798.[9] It was certainly no later, since the factor was complaining in 1800 of the bad state of repair of the fort, indicating that it had been established for some time.[10] The fort was located behind Little Island on what is now called Mission Point. Mackenzie wrote of the fisherman "their nets are set behind the Little Island, which is before the fort."[11]

In 1800 the XYC. arrived in the Athabasca District.

> "In order to keep them [XYC.] from building a fort on Pointe de Sable, the prettiest spot for that purpose on this side of the lake, Mr. Finlay marked it for the North West Company ..."[12]

The XYC. chose to build their fort on Little Island, in front of the N. W. C. fort.[13] In 1802, further competition arrived when the H. B. C. established a fort on the southeast corner of English Island where fishing and skinning was good and wood was plentiful.[14] By 1805 the fort consisted of several buildings and a garden surrounded by a stockade.[15]

In September, 1803, the N. W. C. moved their fort from Mission Point (possibly because of the closeness of the XYC.) east to the place where it was to stand for over a century.[16] About two months later, the XYC. relocated nearer the N. W. C., and the H. B. C. planned to do likewise. The move by the English company never came about since the union of the N. W. C. and XYC. in 1804 proved crippling to their trade. They were forced out of the Athabasca District in 1806.

In 1815, the H. B. C. returned to the Athabasca District with renewed vigour. Fort Wedderburn was built on Coal (now Potato) Island since the English Island site had been too cramped and susceptible to attack and observation from the N. W. C. fort. Fort Wedderburn was built at the " ...

back of the bay on the north side of the island,"[17] against a large rock. In this site, the residents were subject to the force of the north wind; the fort became piled with snow easily and it was eclipsed from the sun for half the year. The rock behind restricted the area which the fort could occupy, and meant that the buildings were placed too near the stockade.[18] The fort was nearly a square, about 160 yards on each side with about six buildings each subdivided into smaller units. By comparison with Fort Wedderburn, Fort Chipewyan was a magnificent establishment and after the union of the two companies, it became the headquarters of the H. B. C. Fort Chipewyan was built on a rocky point and possessed a commanding view of both Lake Athabasca, which it faced, and the land behind the lake. It lay almost half a mile east of Pointe des Mortes (see fig. 12) and was the nucleus of periodic native encampments. There was a plantation (cleared area of ground) outside its walls for the Indian Lodges and sometimes natives were even housed within its walls.[19]

In Keith's sketch of the fort (see fig. 13) building #7 was the important summer and winter house, which accommodated the Indians as well as the resident officers and families. The fort was one-storied on three sides, but buildings #7 and 10 on the north side were two-storied, the upper floors serving as stores.

> "The whole is enclosed and surrounded by stockades in which are S.W. Block Houses or Bastions, exclusive of a Canoe yard at a small distance containing 2 capacious Canoe or Boat story similarly secured and inclosed with stockades."[20]

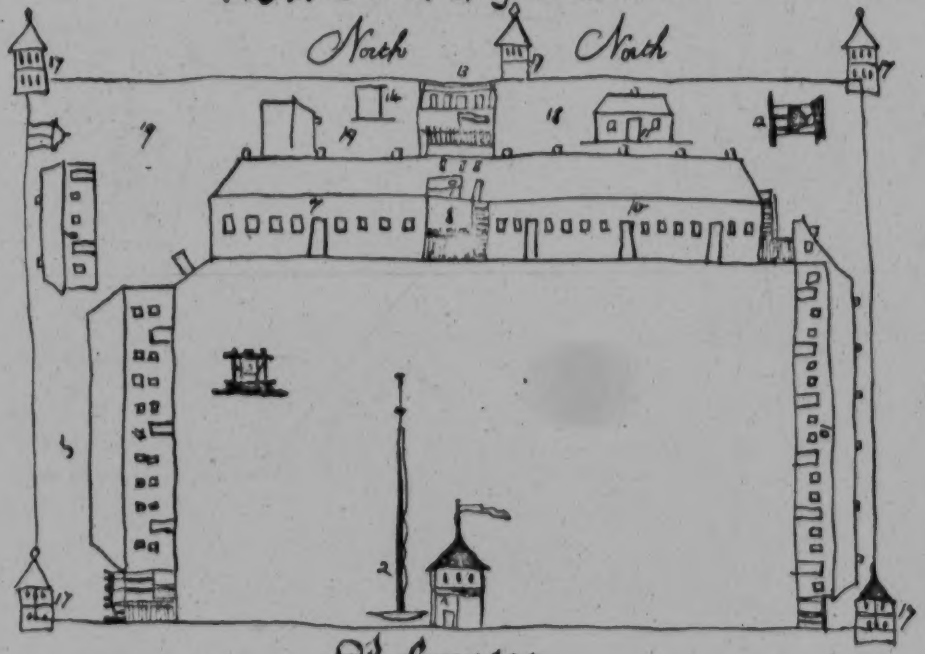
Nineteenth Century: Slow Growth

The Roman Catholic Mission was built in 1849, about a mile west of the trading post, near Mission Point. Faraud considered that it would be

figure 13

A Plan or Rough Sketch
of
Fort Chipewyan Depot
N.W. Indian Territories.

Lat: 58 28 N. Long: 110. 20. W.



References

1 Front Gate
2 Flag Staff
3 Packing Press
4 Stores, with Ice cellars
5 Powder Magazine yard
6 Interpreter & Clerks House
7 Ft. Chipewyan with Mr. & Servants House
8 Covered Passage
9 Watch House & Observatory
10 Depot Servants House
11 do do do Kitchen
12 " " " Fish Store
13 Picketed
14 Palisaded Fish Store
15 Ft. Chipewyan Factors
16 Offices Houses & Blacksmiths Shop
17 Block Houses or Bastions
18 Servants Court & woodyard
19 Women do & do do
20 Gate Gate

Boat Store } & yard
1 Canoe do } & yard
1 Stable
1 Dogs Kennel & yard
} are outside the Fort

Source: Keith 1923. Hudson Bay Company Archives B.39/a./22

easier to make a garden by draining the swamp behind the site he chose, than to clear the trees nearer the fort.

> "The first year, I built a house and a chapel. The second year I turned the swamps into fields and gardens. The third year, I built a new church, a new house, a kitchen, a stable, and a house for the men in our employment. Later on I began, and in four years completed, a large church which would not look too bad even in a town."[21]

By the end of the 1850's there was a nucleus of several buildings a mile west of the trading post, to which the natives were attracted when they visited the fort.[22] (see fig. 14).

The Anglican missionaries built their establishments closer to the trading post, a few hundred yards west of the fort buildings. The mission house was erected in 1876 and the church opened in 1880. There was also a school "held in a small wooden shanty"[23] in 1876, but it was moved to a larger building about 1880. A row of H. B. C. servant's houses ran between the Anglican and H. B. C. buildings, and the scene is admirably illustrated in figure 15 by a pen and ink sketch that Warwick, the Anglican Minister executed.

In the 1870's, the trading post was completely rebuilt by MacFarlane, except for the blacksmith's shop. He built on the site of the original fort and it looked fairly similar to the previous establishment. Although the palisades and bastions belonged to an earlier period of the trade, MacFarlane retained those around his fort. (see fig. 16).

> "Fort Chipewyan is situated on a peninsula at the west end of Lake Athabasca ... All the buildings are of the most substantial character, are all shingled and white-washed and present from the lake, quite an imposing and beautiful appearance. Two large stores with glass windows ... stand next the landing. In a line with these, stand eight houses, occupied by the employees of the Company, all white-washed, while in the rear, and between the two first mentioned stores, is the clerk's house ... On the left of the clerk's house, looking lakewards,

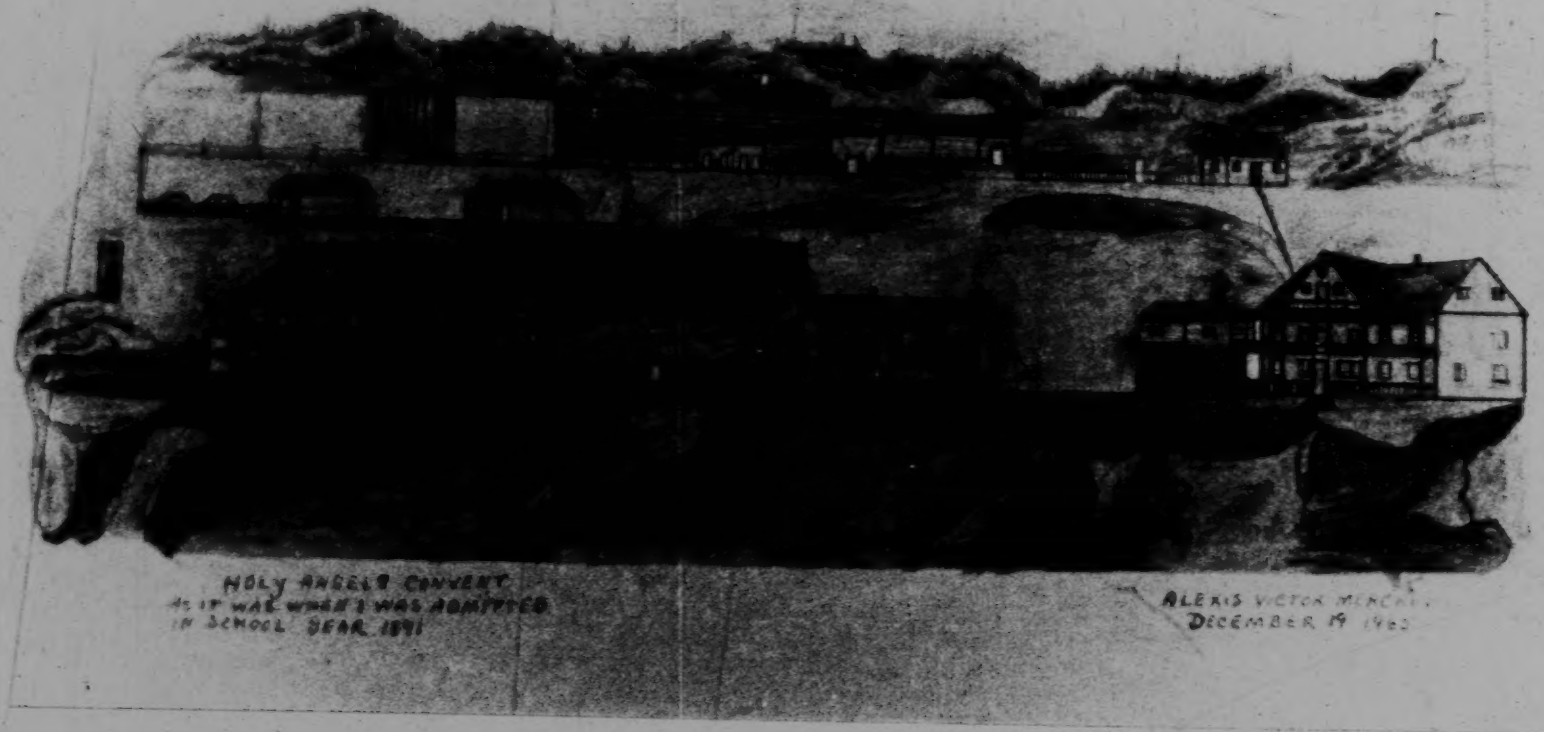
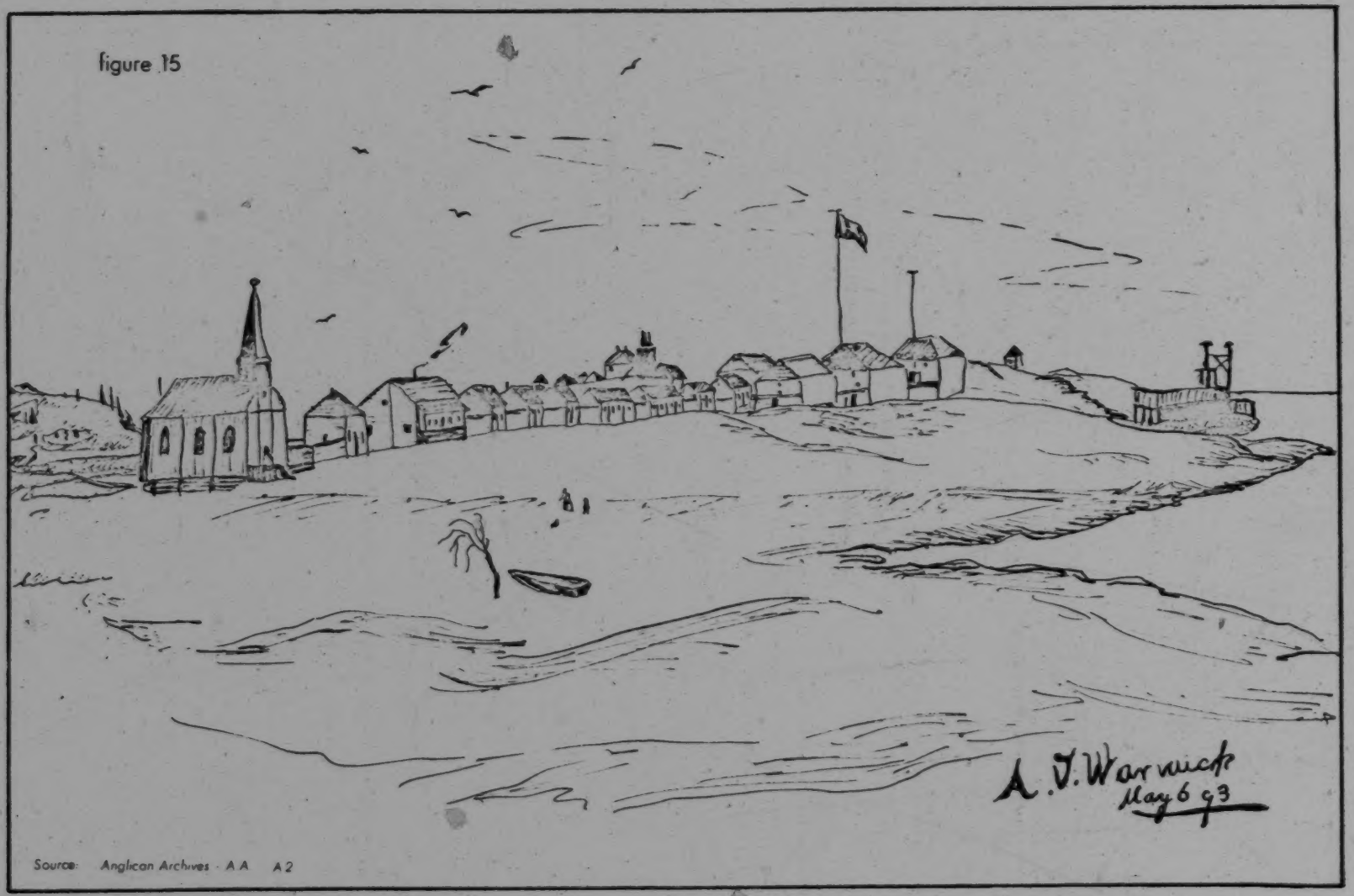


Figure 14. Roman Catholic Mission Buildings, 1891
(Mercredi sketch, courtesy of J. Parker)

figure 15



Source: Anglican Archives - A A A 2

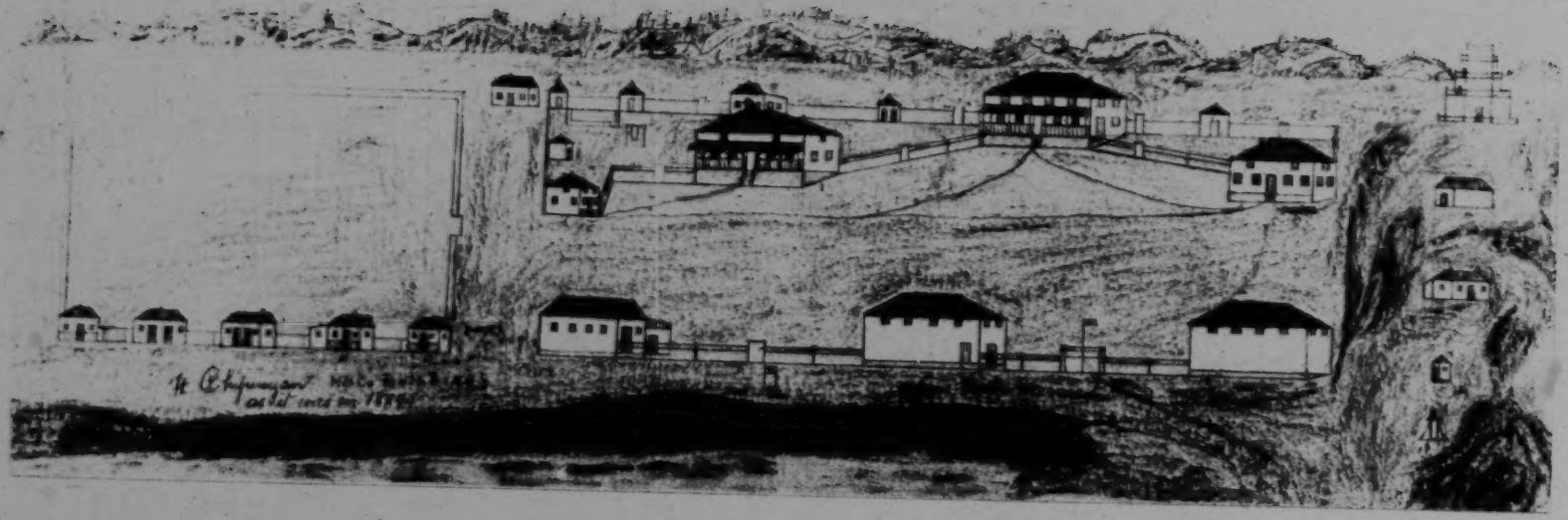


Figure 16. Plan of Fort Chipewyan Post, 1889

(Mercredi sketch, courtesy of J. Parker)

is the general store, and on the right is Mr. MacFarlane's own house."[24]

In the late 1800's, the number of servants' houses had more than doubled in twenty years, with most of them belonging to metis.[25] A number of free-traders had come into Fort Chipewyan and were setting up many stores and trading posts in the settlement in the last decade of the century.[26] At that time

"the majority of Indians lived away from the village, coming in only to sell their furs and pick up supplies in the fall. They lived off the land deriving what money they needed from the sale of fur and working for the freighting companies or the free traders."[27]

Similarly in 1896, Whitney noted that of Fort Chipewyan's

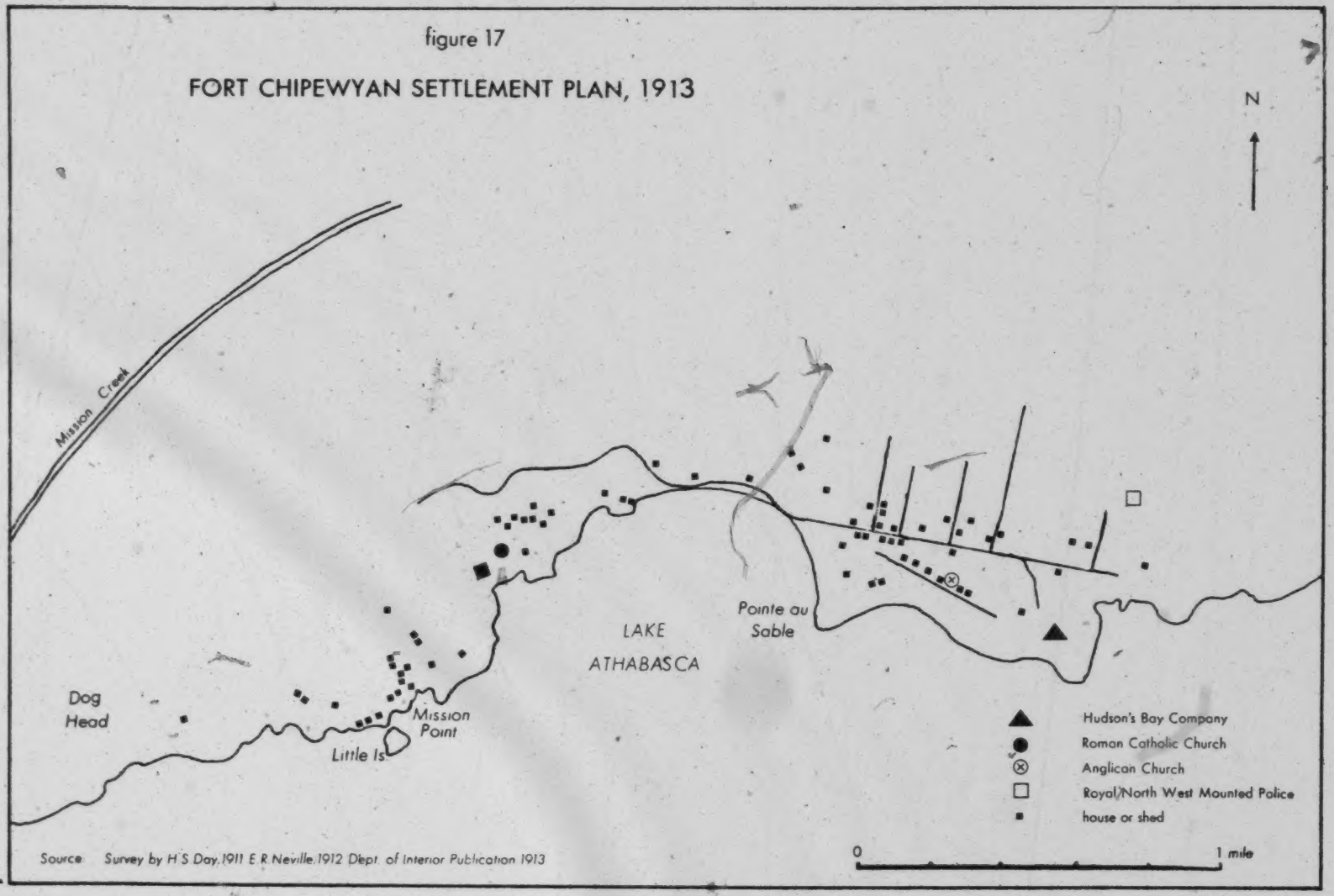
" ... 'census' of four-hundred men, women and children, only a small percentage is in actual residence ... The real dwellers within the settlements are a comparative handful, comprising chiefly the mission people, the company's servants, and a few "freemen" as those who have served their five years' enlistment and set up a little independency of labour are called. Those that live within the company's gates are chiefly half-breeds. In summer they catch and dry fish which forms the chief article of food for men and dogs, or work on the company flat-boats; and in the winter they spend the short days in 'trapping', ..."[28]

Twentieth Century: Accelerating Growth

The first official survey of Fort Chipewyan settlement was prompted by the presence of native squatters who could not obtain land titles nor legal boundaries until a formal survey had been made. The legal lot plan was published in 1913 and included the position of the buildings. (see fig. 17). Although not in a distinct pattern, the buildings are clustered around two centres - the street behind the trading post, and to the south-west of the Roman Catholic Mission. These dwellings belong to the church, trading post, and a small number of Treaty Indians and several metis.[29]

figure 17

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT PLAN, 1913



Source: Survey by H S Day, 1911 E R Neville, 1912 Dept. of Interior Publication 1913

The natives did not necessarily reside in the settlement all the year round, but a certain degree of permanency is implied.

The published plan does not correspond with the surveyor's 1911 field notebook or map, in detail. There were not 48 buildings, as published, but 71, of which only 51 were houses. Only three houses belonged to Treaty Indians. The R.N.W.M.P. station was the only government establishment in the settlement, and was set back a little from the main street, but near the trading post.

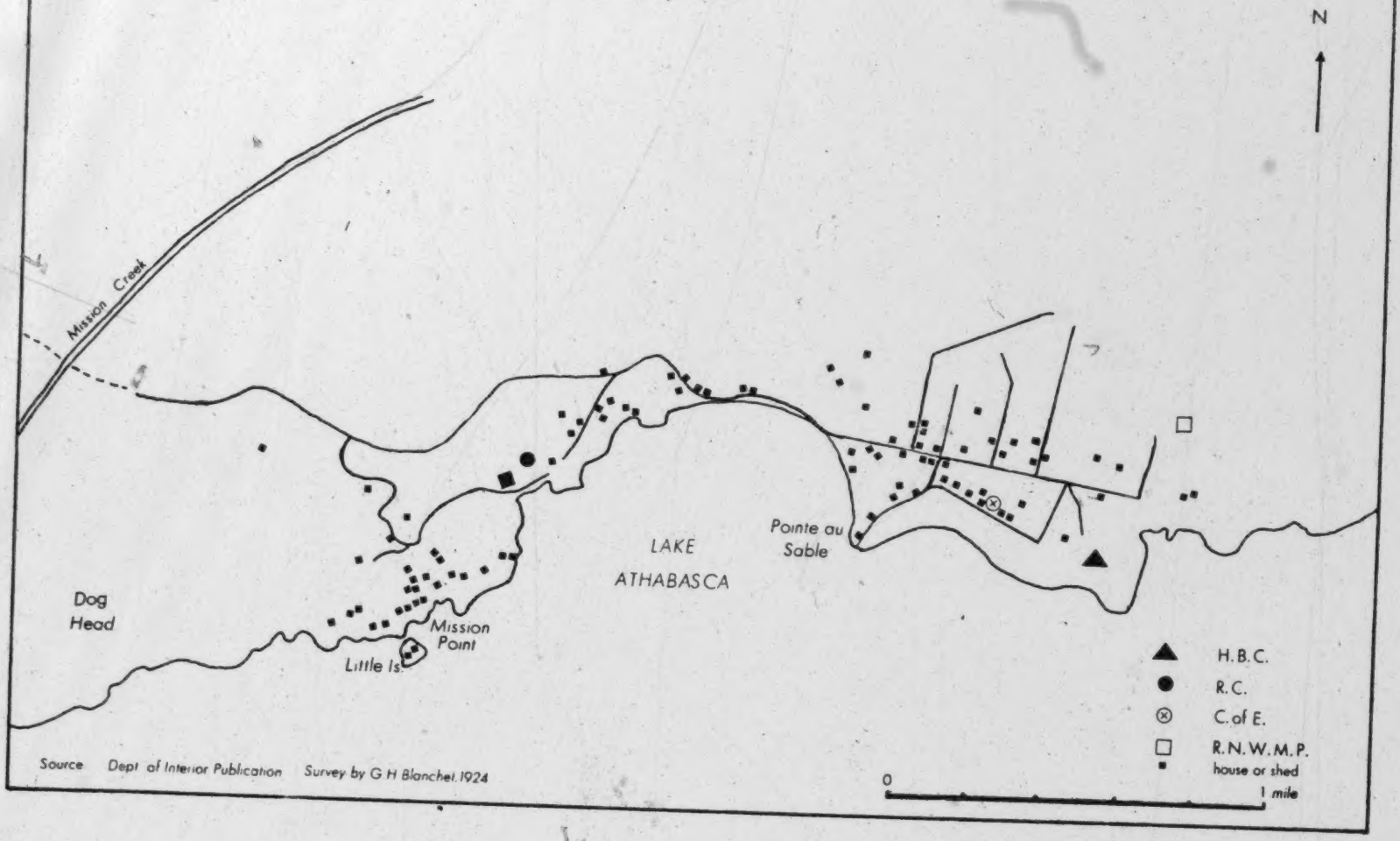
By 1922, there were a few more buildings, and Fort Chipewyan, with a population of 180 residents, presented a more unbroken front of houses to the observer.

> "Chipewyan straggles for a white-painted mile and a half along a rocky strand from the group of Hudson's Bay houses with their sundial, at the right where the boat comes to land without a wharf, past the Church of England Mission with the yellow house of Bishop Lucas, the school house, the cemetary, the little Pro-Cathedral, then a row of dwellings rimming a tiny bay, to the imposing four-storey building of the Catholic Mission with the Bishop's House beside it ...."[30]

In 1924, another lot-survey was published by the Department of Interior. The number of buildings in the settlement does not seem to have increased to any great extent. (see fig. 18). Fort Chipewyan trading post had become outmoded for the function it was required to perform. The barter or exchange economy with furs for trade goods, was declining and more people had cash available. In time "the palisades were replaced by fences, and the council chamber was turned into a cow stable."[31] In 1923, the watch tower built about 1812, was taken down, and in 1939, the old Hudson's Bay fort buildings were demolished, and a modern retail outlet was built on the main street a few hundred yards to the west of the old trading post. Only the chief factor's residence remained, until 1964, when it too was

figure 18

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT PLAN, 1924



torn down. (see plate 1)

No surveys subsequent to the 1924 lot-survey show the buildings of Fort Chipewyan and the following diagrams have been mapped from aerial photographs. Figure 19 shows the settlement in 1946. The straggling line of houses has filled out in depth to give a denser building arrangement. In 1896, Whitney noted the eminence that Fort Chipewyan enjoyed in having two streets running in front of and behind the trading post. Fifty years later the settlement had about 140 buildings and the beginnings of a street plan. The blocks were most evident on the flatter area to the east near Pointe au Sable. Around and to the west of the mission, the buildings were irregularly spaced upon the rock and had nothing more than footpaths linking them with the main road.

In 1945, the Family Allowance Act was passed. This may have given rise to the establishment of a few more cabins by the time the 1946 photographs were taken, since it was the intention of the Act that more natives be encouraged to send their children to school. However, at Fort Chipewyan there was a considerable time lag between the implementation of policy and resultant native movement to the settlement. The act was initially unsuccessful, both in attracting children to the school, and natives permanently to the settlement. The increased number of buildings in the settlement in 1946 was far more likely to have been the result of a gradual movement into Fort Chipewyan from the 1920's onwards.

In 1941,

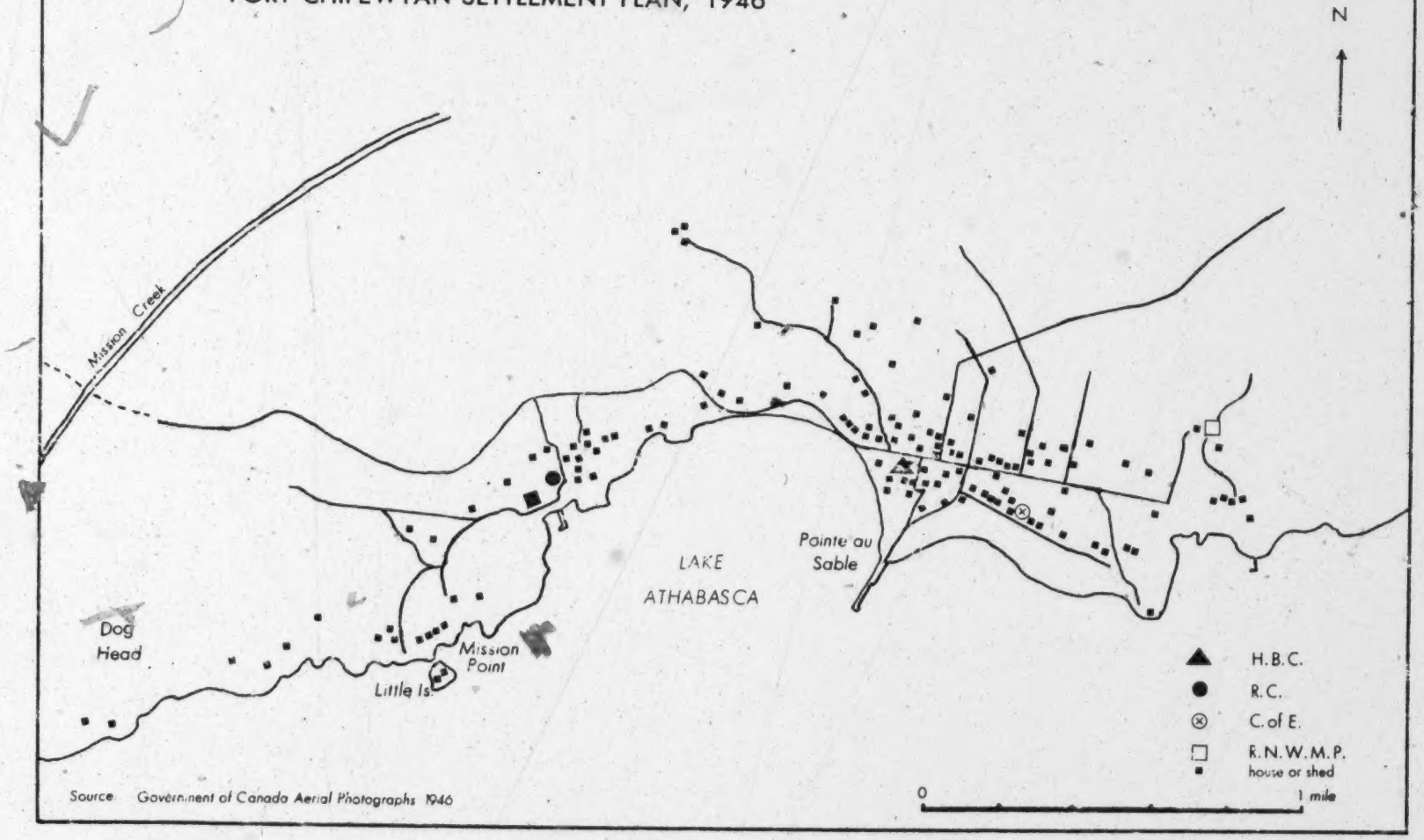
> "the population of Fort Chipewyan consists of about twenty-five white people mostly Government employees or agents of the Hudson's Bay. Some four or five hundred people whose ancesty is partly European and partly native, these live in the settlement during some seasons and scatter over a very large district during the trapping seasons etc. Then there is the native or Indian population which includes two tribes, the Chipewyans and the Crees, of about two hundred and fifty each. These live away from the

Plate 1. Hudson's Bay Company Buildings, 1959
(courtesy of W.C. Wonders)

Plate 2. Government-built native houses, 1973

figure 19

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT PLAN, 1946



> settlement most of the time but come in en-mass for treaty and stay about two weeks 'in' June and July. They also come 'in' in greater or lesser numbers for various occasions as Christmas and Easter."[32]

This description testifies that the church and trading personnel, mostly white, were permanent residents of Fort Chipewyan, and that the metis owned what other buildings existed in the settlement, but did not stay there all year, while the Indians seldom visited the settlement for more than a few weeks.

By 1956, a further enlargement had taken place (see fig. 20). The houses were nearly all built within the boundaries of the settlement and frontage of houses on the main street had become denser, with long narrow lots extending behind them.

Figure 21 shows the settlement in 1971, indicating a massive recent population increase. This is partly due to the very high fertility rate of the natives, with over 30% of the population being in the cohort 0-9 years since 1961. The increase is also due to the very large influx of natives into the settlement in the past two decades. The factors causing this drift into the settlement were evident in 1947.

> "1. Family Allowance; 2. Closed season on Beaver; 3. Scarcity of fur; 4. The amount of debt the traders give out. This has become less and less, with the result that the Indians can get no trapping outfit or food to remain in an isolated area to trap. 5. Decrease in the price of fur."[33]

The Department of Indian Affairs has had a housing program at Fort Chipewyan for 20 years. Ten years ago "the program escalated, with Indians obtaining five to seven houses per year recently."[34] The program involved renovating old houses and making additions to them, with up to $ 3,000 - $ 4,000 spent on older houses, and $ 10,000 spent on a brand new house. (see plate 2). The Indians are given these houses for life, and may even

figure 20

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT PLAN, 1956

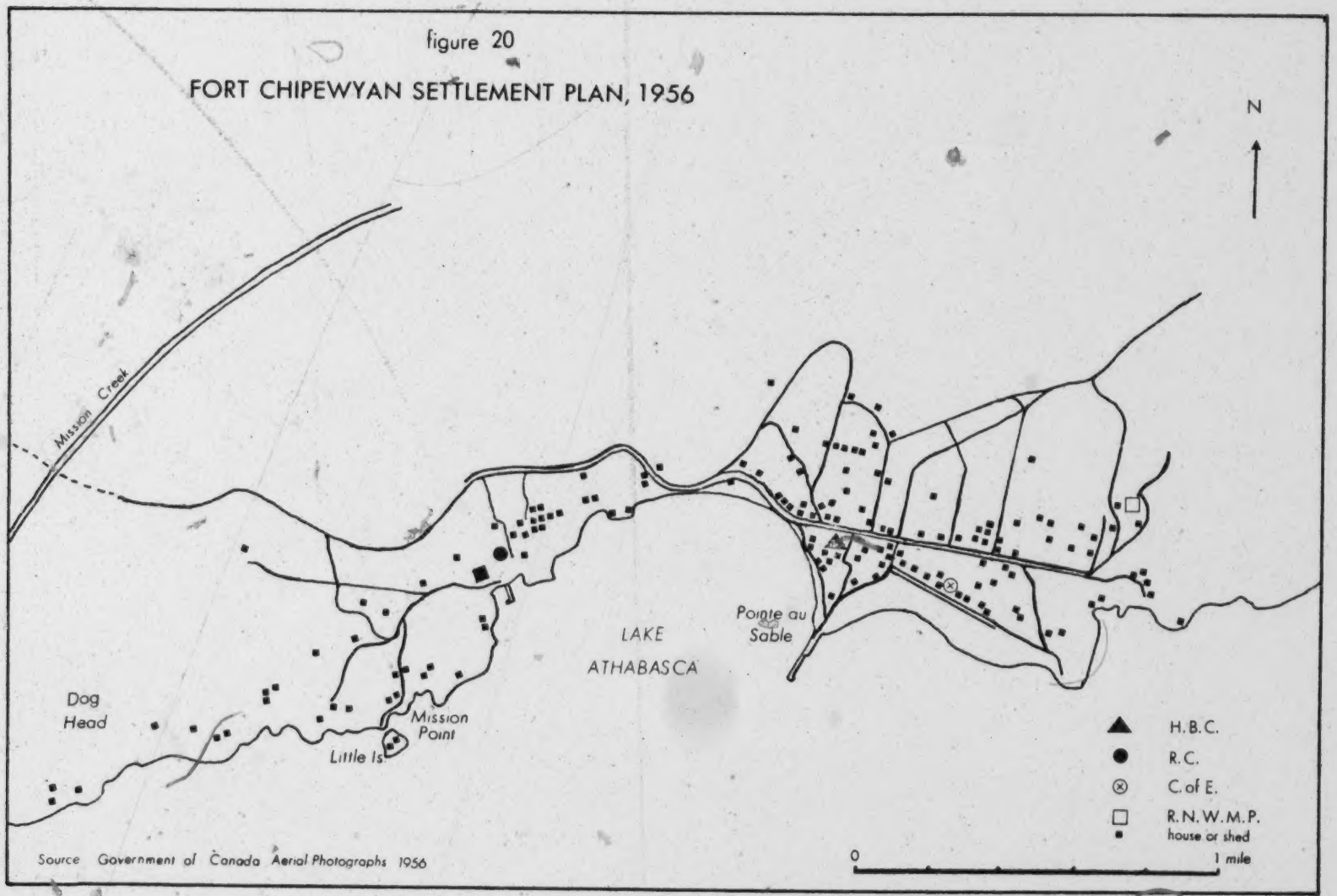
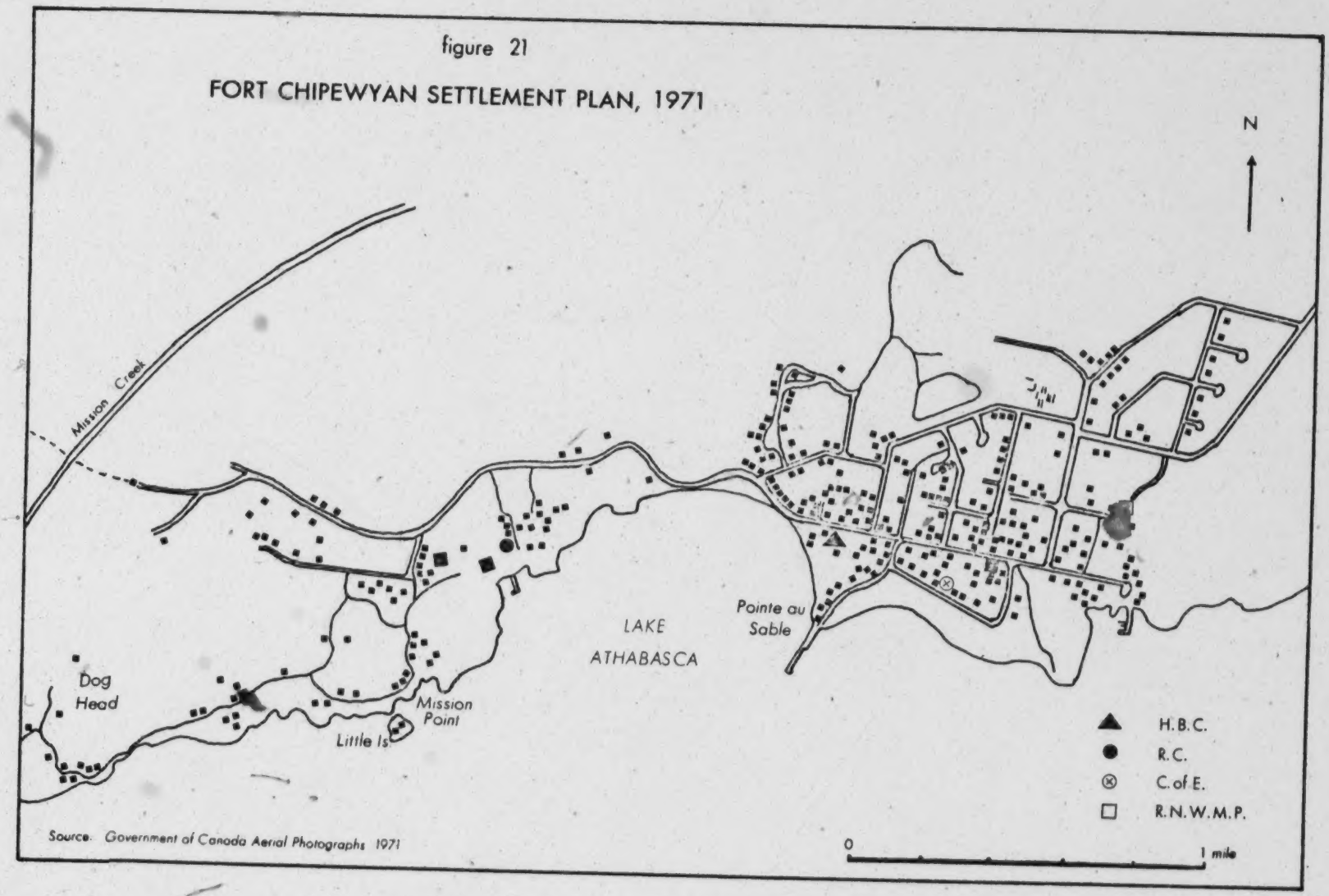


figure 21

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT PLAN, 1971



Source: Government of Canada Aerial Photographs 1971

sell them to another Indian, although they are built on crown land.

The metis are eligible for Provincial loans programs where mortgages are available at very low interest rates, and upgrading programs with $ 1,500 - $ 2,000 spent on each house.[35] In 1973, the Métis Association of Alberta was given a provincial grant to help with Métis housing. With the new program subsequently devised, log houses may be built, or prefinished ones may be shipped in. These houses are rented to the families on the basis of income.[36]

Expanded welfare measures in the last two decades have contributed to the movement into Fort Chipewyan. Families with no income are allowed monies on the basis of family size and age for food, clothing, rent or mortgage and a personal allowance is made to long-term unemployed individuals.[37] This form of security allowed families who previously had to remain in the bush to earn a living, to move to the settlement although they had no income or employment. The disadvantages of bush life were always apparent in the 20th century. It is only recently that wage-earning, or welfare, have provided alternatives to the land-based way of life.

In the 1960's, government involvement in Fort Chipewyan increased (see plate 3). Telephones, electricity, street lighting, water lines, sewage, and airstrip facilities were introduced. It was surely no coincidence that a number of natives were attracted to the settlement after these installations, nor coincidence that they moved to the part of the settlement which had these facilities. The number of houses around the mission increased and a few are found along the shore as far as Dog Head, but these latter two areas (see plate 4) have not the advantage of community services which are concentrated in the eastern segment of the settlement. This eastern section has experienced the greatest growth. The flatter, alluvial area behind Pointe au Sable is densely filled with houses, which stop

Plate 3. Government employees' houses, eastern sector, 1973

Plate 4. Air view of Fort Chipewyan looking east, 1959
Little Island in the foreground.
(courtesy of W.C. Wonders)

abruptly on reaching the granite masses to the east and west of this area. Expansion of the settlement has been forced inland, behind the main street.

By 1969, the community was laid out as a regular townsite, with surveyed lots, key-hole crescents and main streets. After the all-weather airstrip was built six miles north of the settlement in 1966, the former rough airstrip built in 1962 in the northeastern part of Fort Chipewyan provided a convenient site for building.

The sequence of diagrams shows that in the 19th century, virtually the only buildings at Fort Chipewyan belonged to the fur traders or to the missionaries. Even in the early decades of the 20th century, although a few cabins sprang up around the Roman Catholic mission and the trading post complex, the limited economic base of the settlement allowed only a few natives to settle, since employment was not available.

Recently the process of centralization has been very evident. Families have moved from the surrounding area into the settlement in response to schooling requirements, housing incentives, and because of the increasing freedom from the trapline economy afforded them by expanding welfare measures. The residents now regard settlement facilities as important as the homes they occupy, and in order to take advantage of the services, it is evident that further expansion will have to be centered on the eastern segment of Fort Chipewyan.

Footnotes

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11. Ibid., Nov. 12, 1799, p. 374.

12. Ibid., May 22, 1800, p. 389.

13. Loc. cit.

14. H. B. C. Nottingham House Post Journals, Sept. 21, 1802, B 39/a/1.

15. Ibid., 1802, B 39/a/1; 1805, B 39/a/4.

16. Ibid., Sept. 18, 1803, B 39/a/3.

17. Blanchet, op.cit., p. 35.

18. H. B. C. Report on the District, 1820-21, B 39/e/3. For further details on Fort Wedderburn see this reference.

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CHAPTER VII

TRAPPING

The dominant income-producing activity of the area surrounding Fort Chipewyan until recently has been trapping. In the past, trapping was only a part of the domestic economy; in the 20th century it was its primary generator. Early in the 20th century fur was plentiful and prices were high, but the late 1920's and early 1930's saw the beginning of the world depression. Fur prices slumped and caused hardship to the trappers. This eliminated the more marginal trading posts previously operated at Jackfish Lake, Poplar Point, Hay River, Cassiar Creek and Stoney Rapids. The free traders were also eliminated. The trading function was completely concentrated in Fort Chipewyan and the activities of the natives increasingly focused on it.

During the 20th century, natives were attracted to Fort Chipewyan by the semi-permanent employment opportunities which were developing, and movement from the land was speeded up by the decline of fur prices. As well as the physical growth of Fort Chipewyan, changes in its function were taking place. Government agencies moved into the settlement, providing services to the population. This land-to-settlement movement occurred although Federal relief was kept to a minimum in the 1930's. The attitude of the government then was that relief should be left to the trading companies, and that it should not be sufficient to encourage the native to reject his traditional role and move from the bush to the settlement. However, trapping remained the mainstay of the local economy both for the natives in the bush and for the majority of the settlement dwellers.

Instability of the Trapping Industry

The importance of the muskrat catch to the Fort Chipewyan trappers as compared with other furs has been demonstrated by Fuller.[1] For the Wood

Buffalo National Park Indians, muskrat fetched more than half the total value of the fur catch, with the exception of one. The one Indian who caught fewer rats was an old widow, and "squirrel and weasel are often the only furs available to the aged and infirm."[2] On average, muskrat contributed about 70% of the value of all furs taken.

Muskrat has experienced very fluctuating prices, reflecting the fortunes of the fur trade in the 20th century. In 1918, there were "good times for fur" and muskrats fetched $ 1.00 each.[3] The price dropped to .70¢ in 1935, then rose to $ 1.10 in 1939, $ 4.50 in 1945, $ 2.75 in 1946, $ 3.00 in 1947, $ 1.20 in 1949,[4] $ 1.30 in 1951, .43¢ in 1954, .47¢ in 1955, .50¢ in 1956,[5] and .70¢ in 1965.[6] At the 1973 spring fur auctions in Edmonton, they would have brought $ 3.00 each.[7] Although prices have not risen as dramatically as some other furs in the 20th century, its value increased over 600% in ten years (1935-1945), but decreased 1,000% in the subsequent decade.

Fluctuations in the numbers of muskrat and other furbearers also contribute to the instability of the trapping industry. In 1930, the delta area was reported to be absolutely barren of muskrats and a good many Chipewyans couldn't find any place to trap rats.[8] Twenty-six years later, the muskrat population of the delta was reported by Novakowski to be increasing markedly. He also concluded that a time lag of unspecified length existed in the build-up of muskrat populations in the different trapping areas.[9]

Other factors which affect the value of the fur resource are the quality of the pelt, including the condition, size, sheen and colour of skin, its primeness, the care which has been taken of the pelt by the trapper, and the interrelationships of all the factors. These factors are probably not so important as price and number of furs, but their fluctuations all contribute to an unstable basis for a healthy economy.

Native Concern about Trapping Conditions

From early times the natives practised fur conservation,[10] especially with the beaver, and in the 20th century, applied similar conservation measures with the muskrats. In 1928, the Chipewyan chief realised the problem of scarcity of the fur resource and wanted every family of Indians in his band to be allocated 300-400 acres of sloughs and to become muskrat farmers. In this way they could be assured of a constant supply by raising their own rats.[11]

In the last two decades the natives have increasingly realised that furs hold a most tenuous position in world markets and that trapping as carried out at present is unable to support the population as a viable economic activity. In 1951, the average income of Indians trapping in Wood Buffalo National Park was about $ 569.00. Incidental sources of income were therefore important, but "only a few Indians and half-breeds were able to secure better-paid jobs."[12] Novakowski determined the average incomes of trappers in the Chipewyan, 27th Baseline and 5th Meridian Districts over a six-year period (see fig. 24). They were $ 221.8, $ 862.6, and $ 218.1 respectively. This gives an average income of $ 434.16 for all the trappers.[13]

In 1959, the Crees felt that the traditional bush activities were still the main sources of income, but that returns were becoming increasingly uncertain. Indians were turning to additional employment at sawmills or construction projects, but only found temporary work. They were very worried about their own and their childrens' futures.[14] In 1963, the natives sent a petition to the Premier. They realised that the settlement provided amenities, but also noted the expense of settlement living. Furs sold in Edmonton fetched twice the price of those sold in Fort Chipewyan, but they explained that families returning from months in the bush required <u>immediate</u> money from fur sales. They observed that only the better

trappers with good summer jobs could wait for their fur to be sold in Edmonton before obtaining cash returns, indicating the problem of the lack of capital which most of the native trappers had to face.[15]

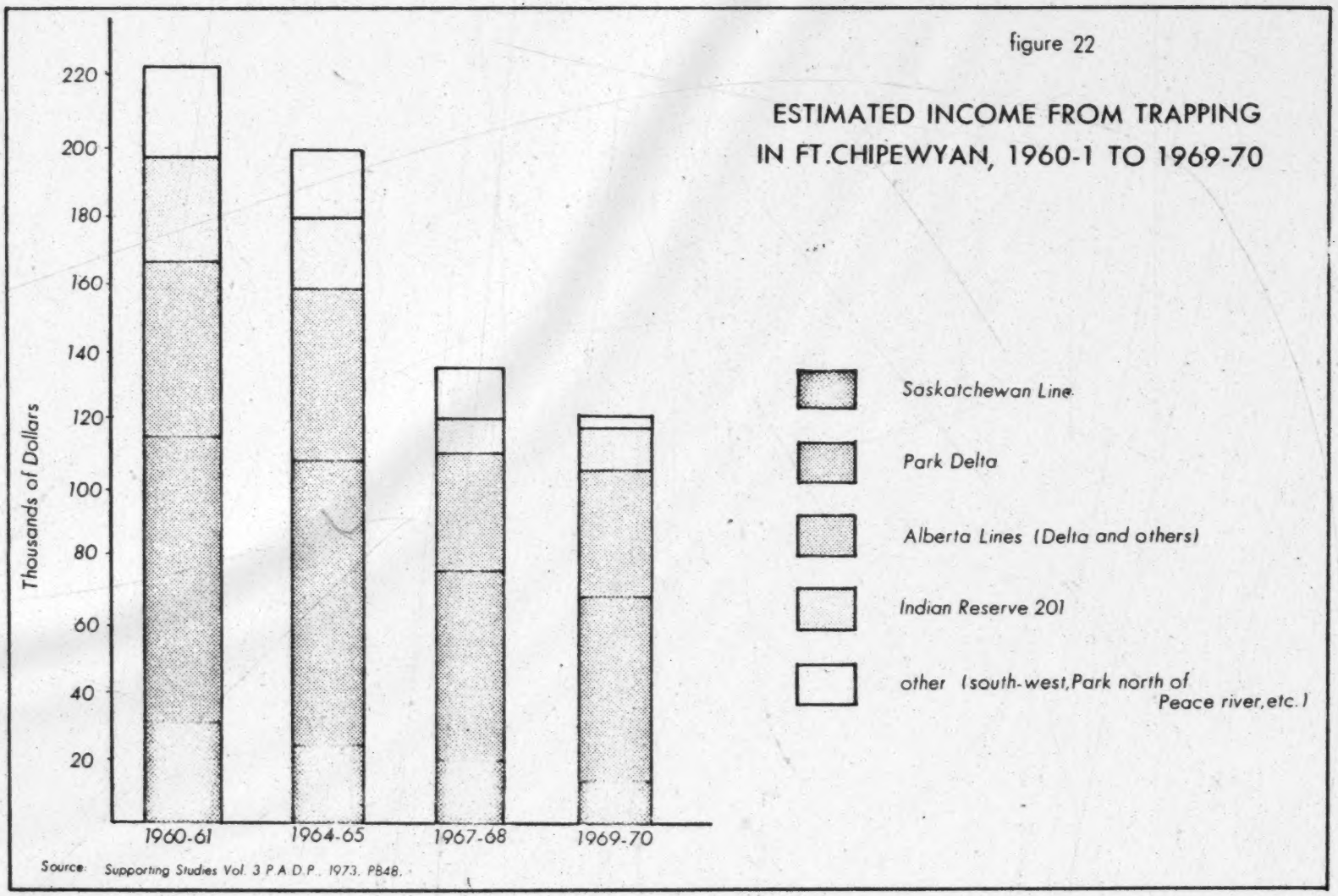
The natives wanted to be trained to prepare pelts the modern way in order to fetch better prices. In 1966, a co-operative was opened in the hope of keeping prices down. The trapper was advanced 60% of the estimated value of his fur, in order that he could survive on this advance while waiting for the balance from Edmonton.[16]

Despite decreasing monetary returns, trapping is still the main and preferred occupation for most residents of Fort Chipewyan.[17] In the 1961 census, 99 household heads indicated that their main occupation was fishing or trapping, i.e. 61.87%. By 1967, the Alberta New Start survey showed that this had increased to 69.3% of the adult household heads. However, in the same year, 46.9% of the household heads earned less than $ 500.00 p.a. outside assistance.[18] That the total income drived from trapping has declined markedly for Fort Chipewyan trappers can be seen in figure 22.

In 1970, a total of 226 people from Fort Chipewyan were active or part-time trappers, and 135 trapped in Wood Buffalo National Park.[19] In 1972-73, the number of trappers in the park had risen by 122 men to 257.[20] The number of trappers has been increasing over the last few years and the increase over a longer time period is shown by histograms on figure 23. Although increasing numbers of young people are looking for new occupations, a sizeable number still trap. However, muskrat are decreasing in the delta portion of Wood Buffalo National Park, traditionally an important source of fur " ... a potential of about $ 300,000. might have been realised on the delta in 1973, from muskrat alone, had there been animals to trap."[21] Incomes from trapping have also shown a downward trend in absolute and relative terms for several years, causing justifiable concern among the natives

figure 22

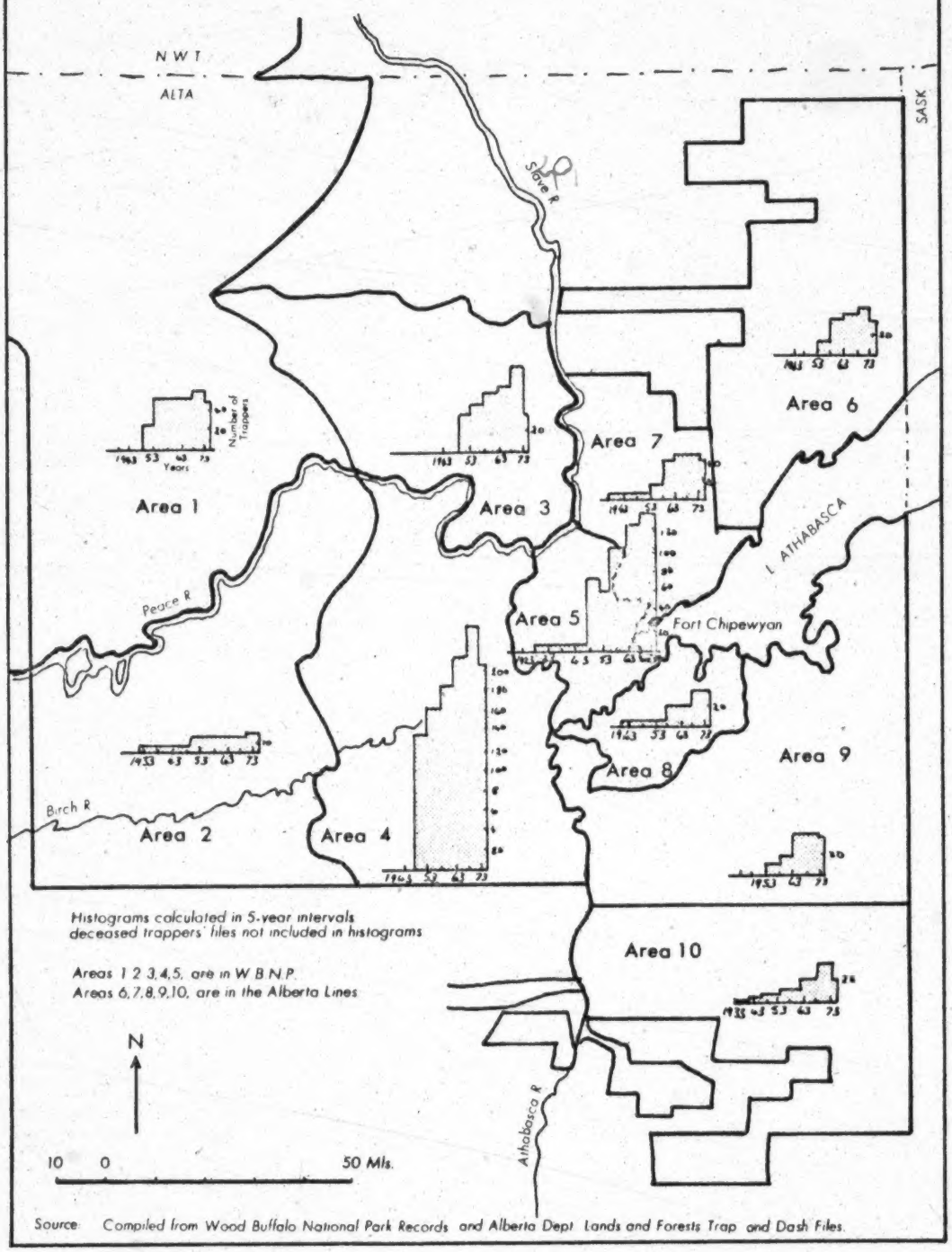
ESTIMATED INCOME FROM TRAPPING IN FT.CHIPEWYAN, 1960-1 TO 1969-70



Source: Supporting Studies Vol. 3 P.A.D.P., 1973. PB48.

figure 23

NUMBER OF TRAPPERS FROM FORT CHIPEWYAN IN THE SURROUNDING AREA



Source: Compiled from Wood Buffalo National Park Records and Alberta Dept. Lands and Forests Trap and Dash Files.

about the present state of the industry.

Large-Scale Spatial Processes and Convergence on the Delta Area

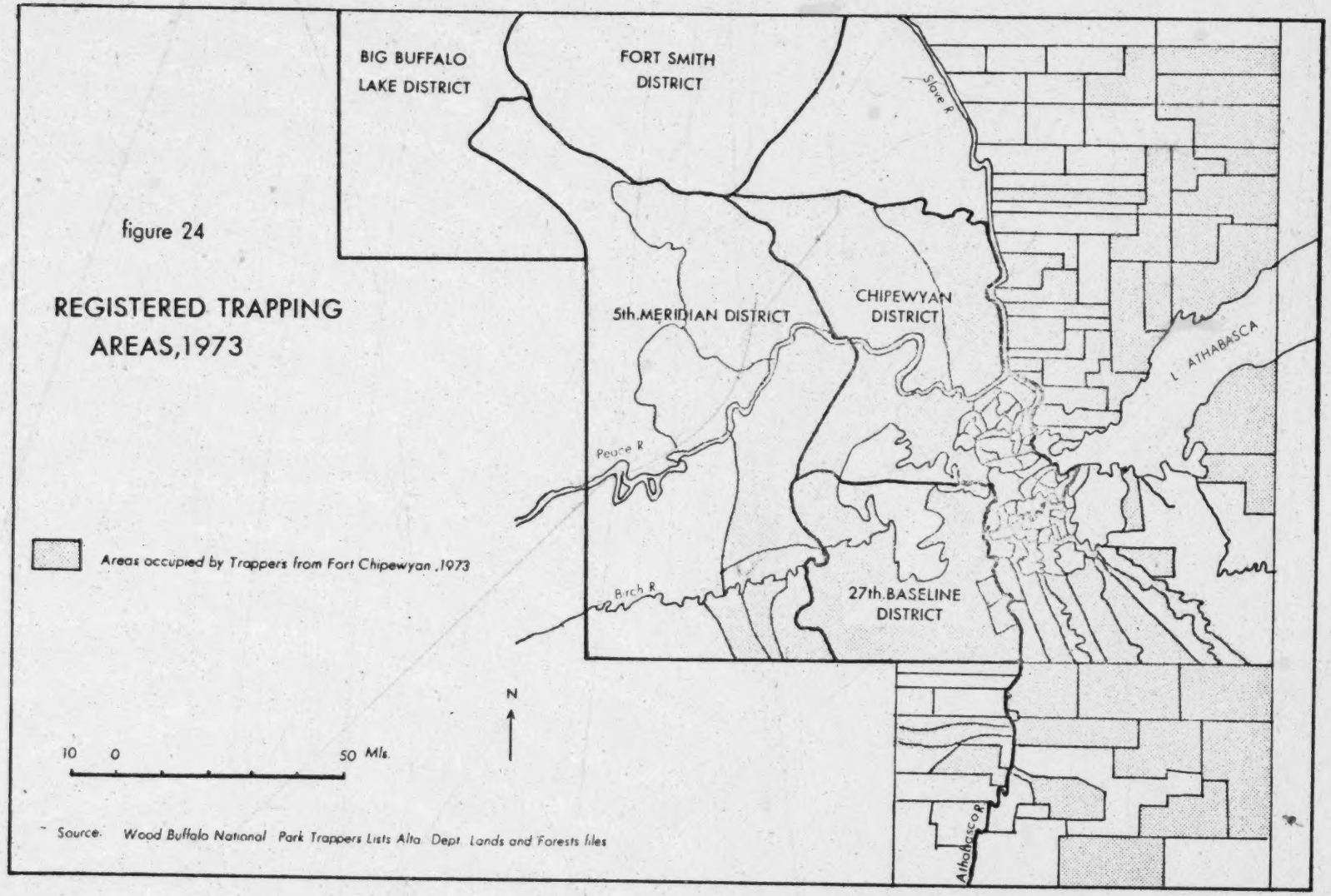
Chapter III described how native movement to hunting and trapping grounds decreased in distance from the fort in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This trend has continued through the 20th century with increasing concentration on the Peace-Athabasca delta. In the 1920's, trapline registration was introduced and the trapper became limited to a particular area of ground. He could not legally roam over and trap large areas as was previously his custom. Wood Buffalo National Park was divided into individual and group trapping areas. At present the individual areas average about 20 square miles but a few are as small as seven square miles. The Alberta lines are mainly individual lines and areas and are somewhat larger than those of the Park, yet represent a great areal compression of trapping movements. The most distant areas (see fig. 23) are within a radius of about 100 miles of the settlement.

The trapping districts with the largest proportion of trappers from Fort Chipewyan are the Chipewyan and 27th Baseline Districts (see fig. 24). A basic difference between these two districts in 1957 was that almost all trappers in the 27th Baseline District lived permanently on their traplines, and augmented their small income with food taken or grown in their area. However, those in the Chipewyan District which was nearer to the settlement, lived almost exclusively within Fort Chipewyan and spent only a limited time on their traplines.[22] In the more distant 5th Meridian District, they lived on their traplines or on the nearby Fox Lake Indian Reservation.

Wolforth wrote "It has been suggested that one of the characteristics of trapping in the 1960's in the Mackenzie Delta is that it is strongly associated with the settlements."[23] This statement may be equally well

figure 24

REGISTERED TRAPPING AREAS, 1973



Source: Wood Buffalo National Park Trappers Lists Alta Dept Lands and Forests files

applied to the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Figure 25 shows the number and distribution of cabins belonging to Fort Chipewyan trappers. There has clearly been a decrease in the number of trappers living all year in the 27th Baseline District despite the increase in total number of trappers. In the past decade a decrease in the number of trappers residing on their lines has occurred in all areas. Since 1964, 37 single cabins, or groups of cabins, have been completely deserted, and only 13 of the 62 cabin groups are used all the year round. Of the eight cabins built since 1964, only four are used all the year round, and two are already deserted.[24]

Group Versus Individual Trapping Areas

Much of the trapping is done on an individual basis, especially in the Park delta and on the Alberta lines, but group areas exist in the Park. Figure 26 shows that trappers on individual lines obtained a better catch than those in group areas. (trends on the graph reflect muskrat population variations) Together, however, all the Park trappers averaged low catches and because of the difficulty of making a living from such returns, Novakowski felt that some adjustment was necessary to increase the size of the traplines in the Park for those actively participating in trapping.

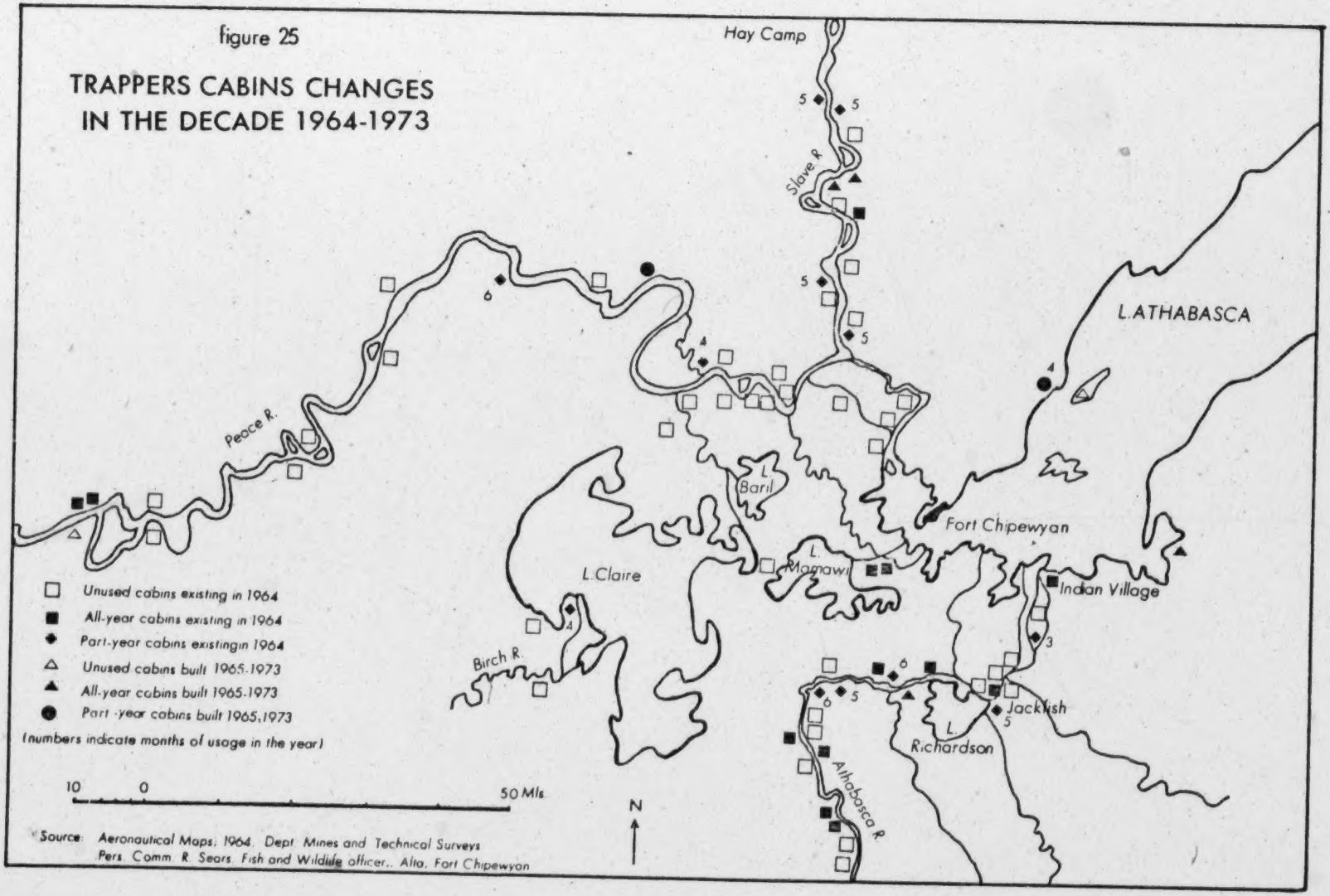
Similarly the Fish and Wildlife officers for Alberta have frequently recommended in the past 20 years that the boundaries be changed to enlarge a trapline, or that small areas be combined to make larger ones. The small areas may remain vacant for years as the trapping effort is not justified by returns. For instance T.A. 449 was too small to have enough fur to warrant trapping it, therefore it was not trapped from 1957 until 1969 when two large trapping areas were made out of T.A. 449 and two old poor ones.[25]

Specific Population Movements between Trapping Areas

It was hypothesised that in time individual trapping areas would

figure 25

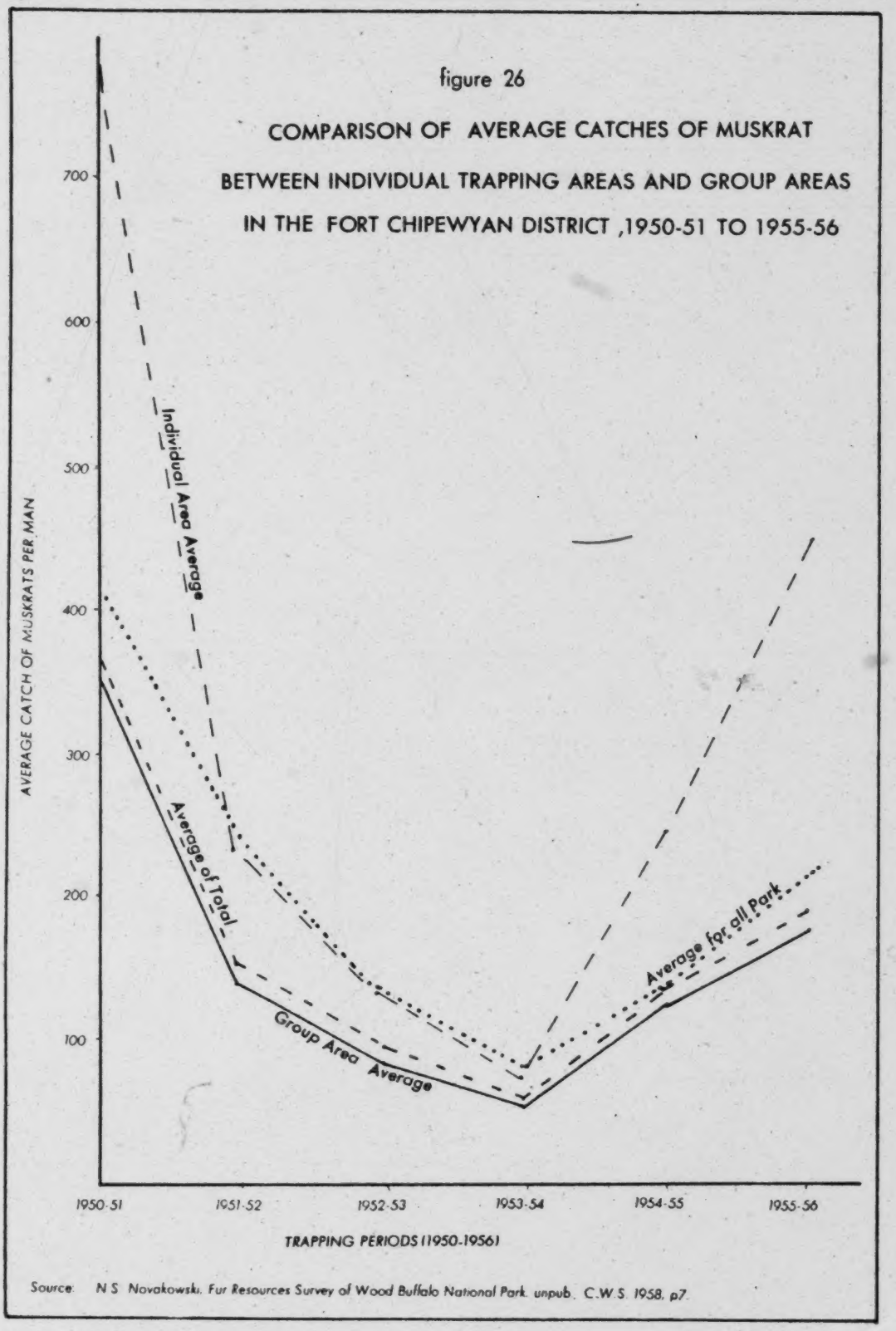
TRAPPERS CABINS CHANGES IN THE DECADE 1964-1973



Source: Aeronautical Maps; 1964. Dept. Mines and Technical Surveys
Pers. Comm. R. Sears. Fish and Wildlife officer., Alta. Fort Chipewyan

figure 26

COMPARISON OF AVERAGE CATCHES OF MUSKRAT BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL TRAPPING AREAS AND GROUP AREAS IN THE FORT CHIPEWYAN DISTRICT ,1950-51 TO 1955-56



Source: N.S. Novakowski, Fur Resources Survey of Wood Buffalo National Park, unpub., C.W.S. 1958, p7.

tend to be located closer to the settlement and that these spatial changes of trapping area ownership would reflect the population movements. It was supposed that this would occur as distant trappers took the opportunity of trapping nearer the settlement, whenever closer trapping areas became vacant.

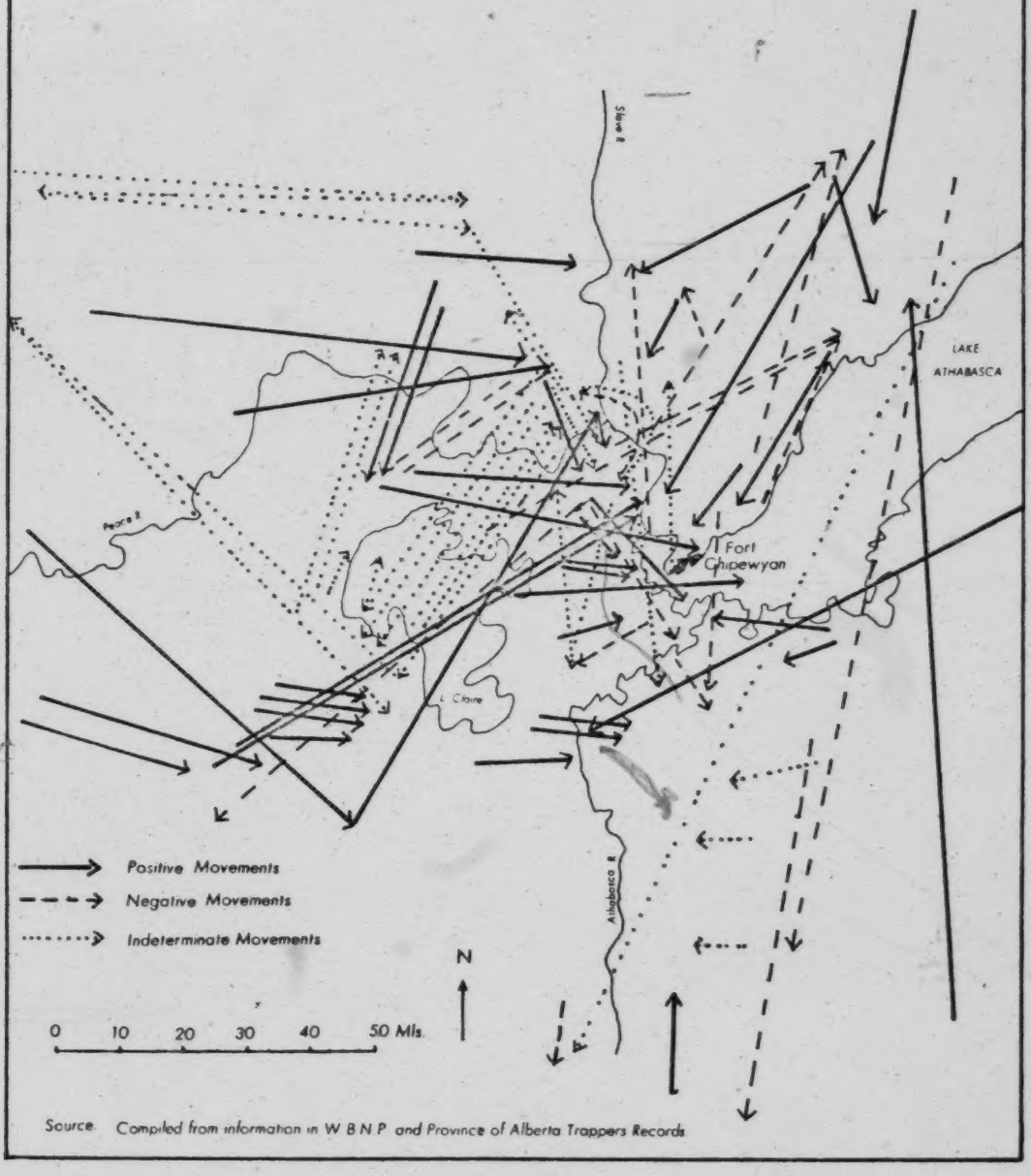
Lines were drawn from approximately the centre of one trapping area to the centre of the area to which a trapper had moved, to represent one or more moves by an individual (see fig. 27). However, this type of analysis revealed no trend with regard to the direction of movements. Some trappers moved directly towards the settlement, others in the opposite direction, and others evinced no definite pattern. It is considered probably that at this scale (within about 100 mile radius of the settlement), directional patterns in terms of physical distance from Fort Chipewyan are not visible, i.e. movements over hundreds of miles may easily be shown to focus on Fort Chipewyan or not, but since access to points only a few dozen miles from the settlement is relatively uniform, a pattern is not evident.

In order to analyse the movements further, only the origins of movements were plotted, in terms of destination. Three groups were differentiated. Those directed towards the settlement, those directed away from the settlement, and those with no obvious trend (see fig. 28). There were 30% of the total number of moves in the no-trend group, 49.5% were towards the settlement and 20.5% were directed away from it.

A pattern emerged where the majority of trappers who moved towards the fort were farthest from Fort Chipewyan initially. Those trappers who moved away from the settlement were initially closest to it. More than half these movements were from points within a 20 mile radius of the settlement, and but for two exceptions, the other movements originated within 30 miles of Fort Chipewyan.

figure 27

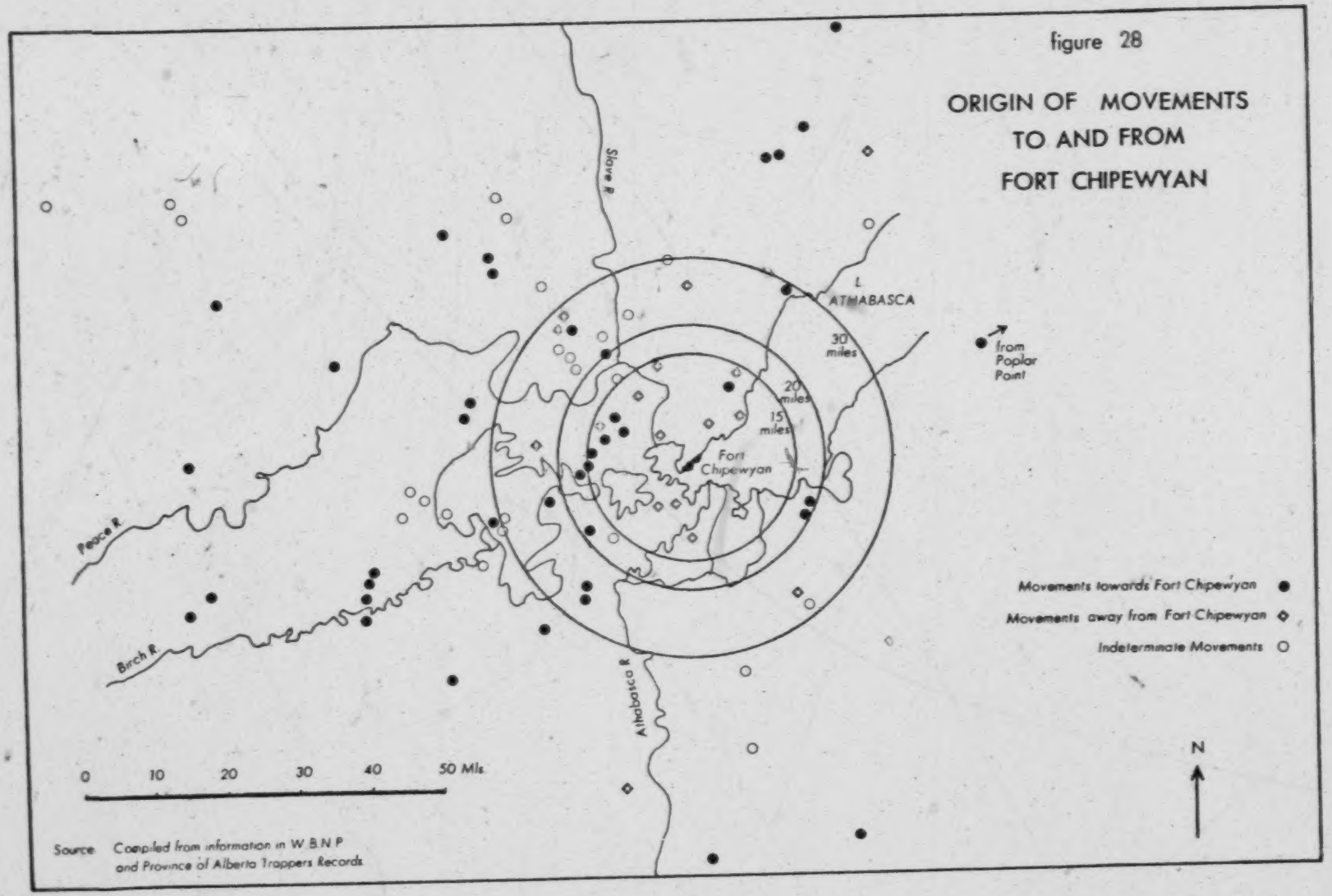
MOVEMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL TRAPPERS TO AND FROM FORT CHIPEWYAN



Source: Compiled from information in W B N P and Province of Alberta Trappers Records

figure 28

ORIGIN OF MOVEMENTS TO AND FROM FORT CHIPEWYAN



Source: Compiled from information in W.B.N.P. and Province of Alberta Trappers Records.

The more distant trappers were no doubt attracted by the amenities of the settlement, and the greater ease of movement over short distances from the town to their lines. Mr. P. requested a line near the settlement as he was "getting along in years, and his line ... was approximately 100 miles south." Similarly a trapper wished " ... to have a trapping area somewhat nearer to his place of residence for reasons that he is finding travel difficult because of his age."[26]

The movement of trappers away from lines within 30 miles of Fort Chipewyan may be partially explained by the depletion of fur resources near the settlement because of overharvesting by large numbers of trappers. As far back as the 1930's there were complaints that the delta area had no muskrats left because of overtrapping by outsiders. In 1955-56, the average annual muskrat catch per trapper in the Chipewyan District was 192 rats. Yet in the same year it was 371 muskrats in the 27th Baseline District, i.e. with greater distance from the delta the catch was higher. Probably the more intense trapping effort found in individual trapping areas on the Peace-Athabasca delta would contribute to overharvesting in this area and so to depletion of the fur resource. Despite these movements away from trapping areas close to Fort Chipewyan, they are not abandoned, but have a greater turnover of trappers. That the delta is still intensely trapped despite decreasing returns, reflects the attraction of the settlement and the fact that fewer individuals are relying completely on trapping for their income.

For over a century hunting and trapping areas have contracted around Fort Chipewyan. In the past 50 years, withdrawal from the peripheral trapping areas has occurred with a concentration around the delta and increased importance of muskrat in the total value of the fur catch. In the last two decades there has not only been withdrawal from the peripheral trapping areas, but from year round occupation of the trapline, and even withdrawal

from trapping altogether.

Impact of the Bennett Dam

The Peace and Athabasca deltas are the focus of the trapping and subsistence activities of most of the native residents of Fort Chipewyan. As explained in Chapter II, the Rivière des Rochers normally flows north towards the Peace River, but reverses its direction of flow, when the water level of the Peace River is higher than that of Lake Athabasca, and the backed-up waters flood the delta.

In 1968, the W.A.C. Bennett Dam was completed on the headwaters of the Peace River in British Columbia. The regulation of water by the dam has had a marked effect on the flow of the Peace River, and thus on the outflow of water from Lake Athabasca, so the dam significantly contributed to the lack of spring floods in the delta. An ecological chain reaction resulted from the shallowing or drying up of the water bodies, including the decrease of feeding, shelter and breeding habitats for the animals. Most critical was the decrease in muskrat habitat.

In the early 1930's, 70,000 to 90,000 muskrat skins could be traded at Fort Chipewyan in a peak year.[27] During 1947-49, 40,000 to 50,000 muskrats were harvested annually in the delta in Wood Buffalo National Park[28] (the Park contains about 60% of the muskrat habitat).[29] The peak harvest in the Park was 144,000 in 1965-66, but has since declined disastrously to less than 2,000 in 1971-72.[30]

Low water was the main reason for the disappearance of the muskrat in many of the perched basins. In the mid 1960's the entire number of muskrat in the whole delta exceeded 200,000 prior to the spring trapping season and in the fall they possibly rose to 300,000.[32] However, although the muskrat population decreased dramatically after the dam went into

operation, a recent increase in numbers has occurred on the area most affected - the Park delta. (see table 7-1), because of raised water levels.

Table 7-1

Aerial Census of Muskrat Houses on the Peace-Athabasca Delta

Area	1971	1973 (Nov)	% Change
Alberta Lines	1,163	1,096	- 6%
Chipewyan Reserve	1,510	1,491	- 1%
Wood Buffalo National Park	920	5,125	+ 456%
Total	3,596	7,712	+ 115%
Number of Animals	40,000	86,000	

Source: Letter to R. Mitchell, Supervisor, Wood Buffalo National Park, from G. Townsend, C.W.S., Nov. 14, 1973.

The sharp drop in muskrat harvest subsequent to the low water levels, had a tremendous impact on the local economy, reflected in the sharp rise in welfare levels.[33] "The people admit they can't live on muskrat trapping alone, but they say that this, combined with fishing and hunting can keep them independent."[34] The Bennett Dam undoubtedly contributed to the decline in muskrat returns after 1967, thus an "outside" force has had an enormous impact on the local economy. However, now that the muskrat population is recovering and fur prices are higher, the question is whether or not the natives will return to trapping as a major economic activity, or attempt to find more settlement-based activities.

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CHAPTER VIII

OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Fishing

Fishing has always played a vital part in the subsistence activities of the Fort Chipewyan natives. Even today, many rely on it as a supplement to their store food. In the last half century, commercial fishing has been an important source of employment for the natives, especially in summer.[1] McInnes Products Ltd. of Edmonton began commercial fishing on Lake Athabasca in 1926 and continued almost without interruption until 1970 when their assets were sold to the Department of Indian Affairs. A goldeye fishery was established on Lake Claire in 1954 and on Lake Athabasca in 1960. Commercial harvesting of walleyes and trout has taken place in Richardson and Athabasca Lakes.

In the last decade, however, residents have felt that employment for locals was far below its potential. In 1965, the natives emphatically stated "we, the people of Fort Chipewyan, want to attract whatever money can be made with fishing ... fishing operations have been conducted by outsiders in a manner opposed to our interests and advantage."[2] By "outsiders," they mean commercial fishing companies, or McInnes Products Ltd. McInnes employed a total of 120 men in 1963, only 55 coming from Fort Chipewyan. In the mid 1960's they only employed 55 men, thus the employees from Fort Chipewyan were much reduced. In 1968, only one Treaty Indian and one Métis fisherman from Fort Chipewyan participated in the McInnes operation.[3]

McInnes Products Ltd., essentially a purchasing company, owned its own equipment which was rented or leased to the fishermen on a yearly basis. The company

> "has made an almost negligible contribution to the incomes of the local Indians and Metis. McInnes Products Ltd. employs

Indian and Metis to work in the fish processing plant while the actual fishing is done by men of Scandinavian origin from Gimli, Manitoba, and men of Russian origin from Alberta."[4]

Although natives are allowed to fish in Wood Buffalo National Park for their own use, commercial fishing is not allowed. Yet

> "we figure we can get about 300,000 to 400,000 pounds of fish out of the Park, of which we can get anywhere from 40,000 to 60,000 pounds of goldeye, pickerel, whitefish and pike. And there's quite a few people from the Park that sure would like to fish, because its their country and they're used to it."[5]

Until recently, zoning regulations allowed all Albertans to fish everything north of the 57th parallel, in Zone G, as well as in their own zone. This meant that all Albertans could fish in Lake Athabasca and area, but the people of Fort Chipewyan were unable to fish in other parts of the province. Locals felt the fish quotas were too small, even should they be exclusively allocated to the local people, since the income would only be a maximum of $ 40,000 for the full quota - $ 250.00 per family.[6] They resented the operations of McInnes Products Ltd., who with large boats and a capital backing, precluded local competition and caught the fish quota before the locals. (see Plate 5.)

The other dimension of the commercial fishing operation is processing. McInnes used to have a freezer barge at the Willows (at the mouth of Big Point Channel, Athabasca River) but that was moved to Crackingstone Point in 1969, where their permanent facilities were located. Almost 50 locals were employed there in the summer of 1964, but only eleven fishermen from Fort Chipewyan participated in 1969.[7] Although it is impossible to determine employment and income over the years from commercial fishing, "it was a substantial source of income for both men and women during the 1950's and early 1960's. At present the impact is virtually nil."[8]

Plate 5. Fishing Camp at Bustard Island in summer, 1973

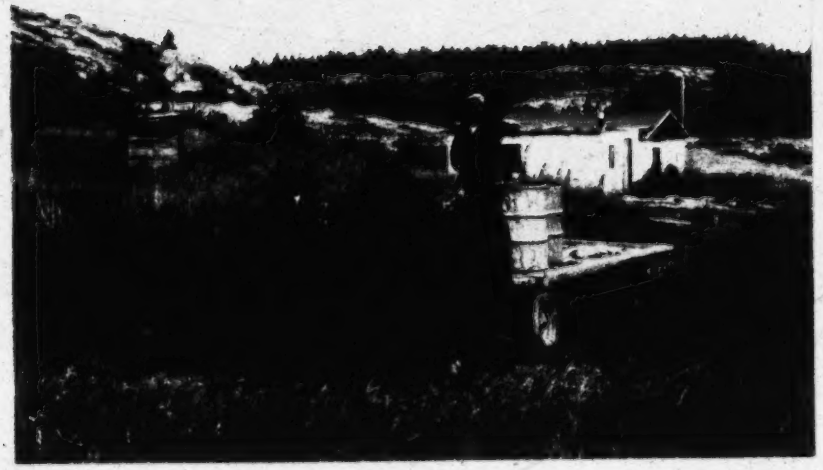


Plate 6. Horse-drawn water deliveries to the western part of the settlement, 1973

Lumbering

The main harvestable stands of white spruce (Picea glauca) are located in the two presently active timber berths.

> "The Peace River Block (408) occupies the lowland area, immediately adjacent to the river.... The Athabasca Block follows the Athabasca River.... There are several small scattered stands elsewhere in the park although these are not large enough to support any substantial cutting."[9]

For years the logging and sawmilling of timber for fuel and construction has provided employment for Fort Chipewyan residents. In 1951, Eldorado Mining and Refining Ltd. began cutting timber along the Peace River, but the mill burned down in 1961. The 1950's saw lumbering on a large scale as Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd. of Edmonton (1955), the Park Lumber Co. (1955), and Denney Logging Co. (1957), of Fort Smith began operations in the Park. The latter company went bankrupt in the 1960's, the Park Lumber Co. closed in 1958 and Swanson Lumber Co. is still operating. These companies provided considerable income for the natives of the Fort Chipewyan area. Over the past decade, forestry has rivalled and sometimes surpassed trapping in its benefits to the community. (see fig. 33).

Employment improved in the late 1960's from the situation in 1963 when the locals had complained that Swanson only hired 30 of its 80 men from Fort Chipewyan. They wanted their own sawmill so as to build such things as fish boxes, houses and boats more cheaply and with better quality, and to eliminate freight charges.

Tables 8-1 and 8-2 show that the majority of lumber workers came from the Fort Chipewyan area. The logging contractor also obtained most of his men locally. However, the supervisory personnel came mainly from outside the local area. Thus the largest proportion of income has always gone to outsiders, despite the fact that more local people were employed.

Table 8-1

Numbers and Place of Residence* of Sweetgrass Landing Non-Supervisory employees of Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd., 1967-1970

Residence	1967		1968		1969		1970	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Fort Chipewyan	71	60	54	69	31	84	65	65
Sweetgrass Landing	67		70		136		11	
Other	91	40	55	31	32	16	41	35
Total	229		179		199		117	

Source: Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd., in Supporting Studies, P.A.D.P., 1973, p.B58.
* Residence as stated on T-4 Tax slip. Logging contractor employees not included.

Table 8-2

Income Earned by the Employees of Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd., Sweetgrass Mills, 1967-70, 000's of $

	1967	1968	1969	1970
Non-Supervisory				
Fort Chipewyan Sweetgrass	179	190	205	104
Other	84	67	52	52
Logging Contractor	20	16	17(est.)	17(est.)
Supervisory				
Fort Chipewyan Sweetgrass	20(est.)	20	19	10
Other	225(est.)	253	296	332
Total				
Logging Contractor Fort Chipewyan Sweetgrass	219	226	241	B1
Total other	309	320	348	384
	519	546	589	515

Source: Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd., in Supporting Studies, P.A.D.P., 1973, p. B59.

The recent sharp decrease in number of employees does not bode well for the future impact of lumbering on the settlement. The planer at Sweetgrass used to provide all-year employment, but that operation ceased in 1968 when a planer was acquired at Fort McMurray where there was natural gas available for the timber drying process. Now Swanson's mill has been relocated by barge to Embarras, where a mill owned by Primrose Forest Products Ltd. was bought in 1969 by Swanson. However, the National Parks Branch intend to completely eliminate logging from Wood Buffalo National Park when the present contract runs out in 1980, since Park policy has changed in the last two decades, thus exacerbating the problem.

Mining

More significant than the gold discovery at the east end of Lake Athabasca in the 1930's were the uranium strikes in the Beaverlodge area. After W.W. II, the pace of exploration accelerated and production began in 1953 by Eldorado Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd., a Canadian Crown Corporation. Other companies came in the 1950's and employment opportunities for the natives increased.

Inherent in the mining industry is the boom and burst nature of its development, because it is governed by the market, and by the quantity of the resource. The late 1950's and early 1960's saw the closing and selling out of the smaller mines,[10] and Eldorado has been the only producer since 1964. The uranium market is depressed at present, but renewed demand is expected at the end of the 1970's.[11]

Mineral exploration and exploitation have provided income to a few Fort Chipewyan residents, but the work was often irregular and of the unskilled type, such as road or building construction, muck tramming or claim staking. Most men only stayed a short time because of lack of experience and difficulty in communicating with employers. Similarly at Fort McMurray

the Great Canadian Oil Sands operation was initially unsuccessful in holding men and "100% attrition rates used to exist."[12] Mokta Ltd., a company searching for uranium at Cluff Lake, only 60 miles from Fort Chipewyan, had the same experience. In 1971, "despite good pay and good food" for the several Fort Chipewyan men working there, "most of their employees stay only a few weeks.[13]

Recently, a number of improvements at G.C.O.S. have come into effect. A screening board of local men in Fort Chipewyan advises prospective applicants, and training programs are available for successful applicants.[14] One program is a 30-day orientation course which includes a family visit. The other is a five month on-the-job program. Local women visit employees' wives if their friendship is desired. As a result of these schemes, the 100% attrition rates have been reduced to 20% in the last two years.

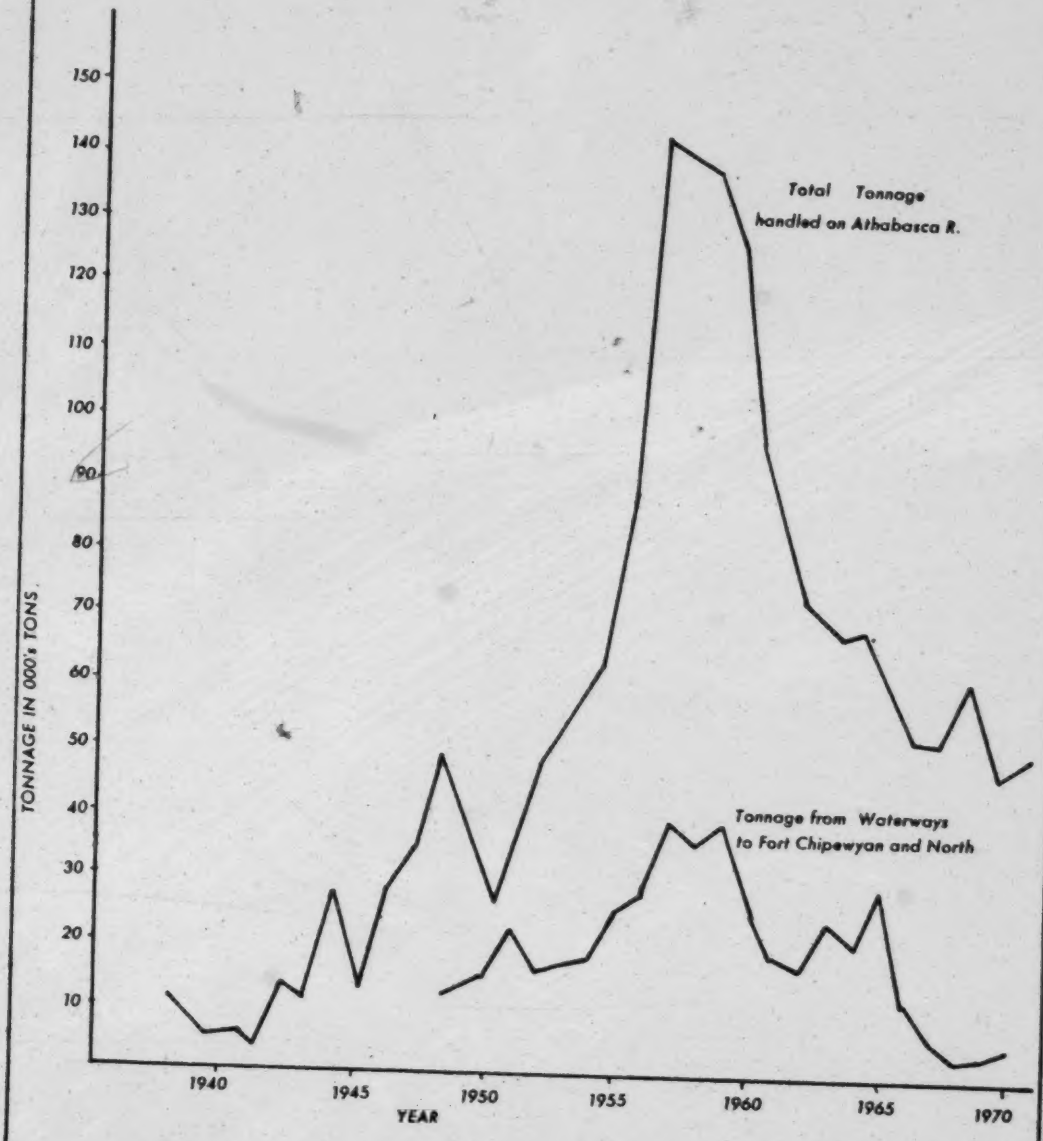
Mattern estimated that in a year, an average of five single men per month moved to Fort McMurray, but that only one of these stayed there, since not many men wished to relocate from Fort Chipewyan. This hesitancy to relocate would seem to be the main problem since oil sands developments at Fort McMurray can not directly involve the residents of Fort Chipewyan except those who are willing to relocate.

Transportation

Fort Chipewyan has for centuries been closely associated with the water transportation system into the north of Canada. Although the system was used by others, Lloyd reported that as late as the 1940's the solid core of freighting was still done for the fur trade.[15] In the 1940's, five companies operated out of Waterways, and employed local men as navigators, deckhands and dockside workers. The discovery of uranium caused a tremendous increase in the tonnage handled. (see fig. 29). Since 1956, the tonnage

figure 29

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION LTD. TOTAL TONNAGES HANDLED AND TONNAGES PASSING THROUGH OR DESTINED FOR FORT CHIPEWYAN



Source: W.H. Hunter in E.R. Reinelt Proc. of the Peace-Athabasca Delta Symposium, 1971. p238
Hanson, Letter to J.R. Card, in unpub. info. on the P.A.D.P. 1 Dec. 1971

has steadily decreased to about 50,000 tons, reflecting the uranium recession as well as the re-routing of cargo for points north of Lake Athabasca. The tonnage to points north of Fort Chipewyan (Sweetgrass Landing, Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith) has dropped by 91.7% since the completion of Highway No. 5 to Fort Smith.[16]

With decreased freight passing through Fort Chipewyan, employment opportunities were also reduced. At present, no one from Fort Chipewyan is employed by the Northern Transportation Co. Ltd., the only water transportation company operating for the last 20 years on the Athabasca River system.

Table 8-3

Passengers and Freight (pounds) handled at Fort Chipewyan Airport, April 1966 to December, 1973

Date	Passengers	Child/Youth	Freight
1966	1,404	-	32,590
1967	3,599	-	354,923
1968	3,011	442	355,244
1969	3,573	634	453,921
1970	3,930	1,072	472,923
1971	4,795	1,014	573,830
1972	4,315	1,421	534,449
1973	3,726	1,556	451,874

Source: Pers. Comm. A.H.C. Plunkett, Administrative Asst., Northern Operations, Pacific Western Airlines, Edmonton, March 8, 1974.

Several airlines served Fort Chipewyan earlier in the century, but all eventually ceased operations. There have also been several smaller charter companies operating there, especially in the last two decades. In April, 1966, Pacific Western Airlines began providing a thrice-weekly service to and from Edmonton. Its activities peaked in 1971 because of the greater government activity associated with the Peace-Athabasca Delta Project. (see table 8-3). No great amount of employment for locals is provided by it

other than work at the air terminal as janitor, for instance. Recently, Noralta charters set up a float'plane service based at Fort Chipewyan, but although this is frequently used to and from Fort Smith, the majority of passengers are outsiders.

When treaty No. 8 was being negotiated, the Chief of the Chipewyans asked the government to undertake to build a railway into the country.

> "'Here it was,' Mr. McKennan writes me, 'that the Chief asked for a railway - the first time in the history of Canada that the red man demanded as a condition of cession that steel should be laid into his country. He evidently understood the transportation question, for a railway, he said, by bringing them into closer connection with the market, would enhance the value of what they had to sell, and decrease the cost of what they had to buy. He has a striking object lesson in the fact that flour was $ 12.00 a sack at the Fort.'"[17]

It was not until the decision was made 60 years later to exploit the lead-zinc resources at Pine Point, N.W.T., that the possibility arose of a railway being built through Fort Chipewyan. In 1959, a commission studied the advantages of the proposed northward route extension either through Grimshaw or through Waterways-Fort McMurray. One commissioner favoured the eastern route along the Athabasca and Slave rivers, because of the greater contribution it would make to regional development. However, the other two commissioners favoured the Grimshaw route and the railway was completed over the latter route in 1964.

At present, Fort Chipewyan has no highway communication with the outside. The nearest all-weather roads are No. 63 to the south (115 miles), No. 58 to the west (150 miles) and No. 5 to the north (100 miles). A winter road between Fort Vermilion and Peace Point was opened in 1962-63 and is used more regularly by residents travelling to points south than the winter road from Fort McKay to Old Fort Bay on the south shore of Lake Athabasca.

There is a winter connection between Fort Chipewyan and Uranium City, used mainly by freight trucks. The winter road to the Peace Point circuit and thence to Fort Smith is used relatively frequently by the locals. (see fig. 30)

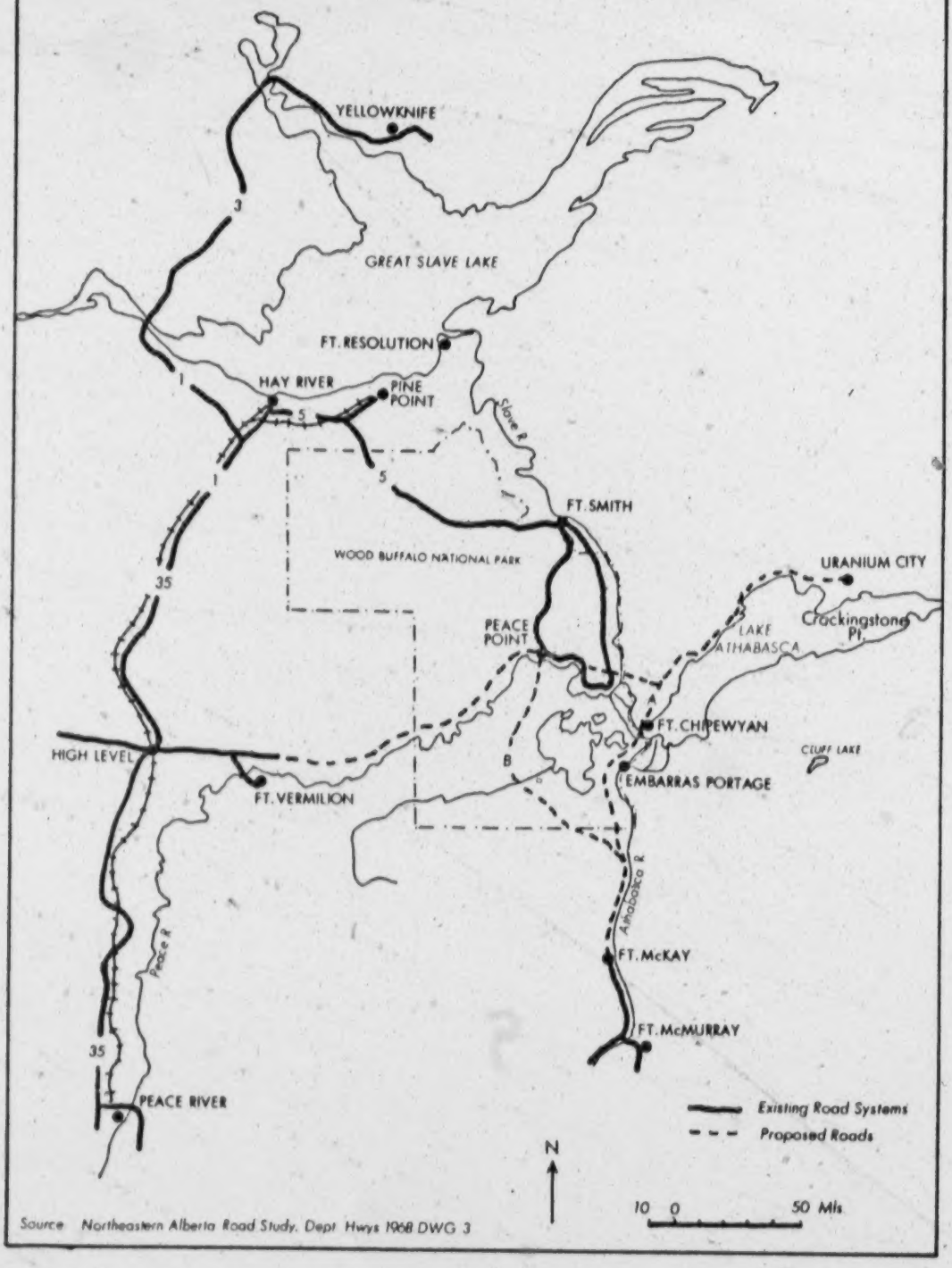
Local Businesses and Services

A certain amount of employment is generated for local people by a number of businesses and services in the settlement. (see plate 6). Over 90% of the jobs were occupied by locals in 1970-71 (see table 8-4), but they generated only about seven months of employment per person. The average income was over $ 3,000.00, but when businesses involving families, or one individual are eliminated, the average income is less. Local construction does not provide large scale employment, although it does provide a steady source for a few individuals during the building season. Government employment will be dealt with in Chapter X.

At present, the majority of working natives in Fort Chipewyan make their living from the biological resources of the surrounding area, as they have done for centuries. Much of the employment has been with outside firms, however, and recently there have been proportionately fewer jobs available for the local people, with nearly all the higher income positions being occupied by outsiders. The under-and unemployment situation has probably been exacerbated by the influx, during the last two decades, of natives who formerly dwelt in the bush.

figure 30

ROAD ROUTES EXISTING AND PROPOSED, 1968



Source Northeastern Alberta Road Study. Dept Hwys 1968 DWG 3

Table 8-4

Estimated Employment and Income Generated by Fort Chipewyan Services and Businesses 1970-71

Business	Employees		Man-Months		Total Income 000's$	
	Local	Transient	Local	Transient	Local	Transient
H.B.C. and	6	1	72	12	21.6	10.0
C.M.C. co-op stores	3	-	36	-	10.8	-
6 Taxis (individual cars)	6	-	N/A	N/A	10.0	-
2 Motels	2	-	24	-	7.2	-
	2	-	26	-	7.8	-
Movie Theatre	-	-	-		0.3	-
Laundromat	1	-	12	-	1.5	-
Construction Company	2	-	15	-	12.0	-
2 Pool Halls	-	-	-	-	2.0	-
2 Garages	N/A	-	-	-	2.0	-
1 Gasoline Sales	1	-	12	-	10.0	-
1 Bulk Oil Sales	-	1	-	12	-	6.0
Handicraft Guild	-	-	-	-	0.5	-
2 Water Wagons (one tank and truck, 1 team with wagon & barrels)	2	-	9	-	15.0	-
Skiff Building (4 individuals)					2.5	-
Trucking Service	2	-	12	-	3.0	-
Fish Sales	3	-			1.0	-
Utilities (Electric)	1.5	1	12	-	6.7	8.0
Restaurant	3	-	36	-	15.0	-
Sub-Totals	37.5	3	254	36	129.9	24.0
Total	40.5		290		153.9	

Source: Moncrieff Montgomery & Assocs. in Supporting Studies, Vol. 3., P.A.D.P., 1973, p. B69.

Footnotes

1. W.A. Fuller and G.H. LaRoi. "Historical Review of Biological Resources of the Peace-Athabasca Delta" in E.R. Reinelt, (ed.) Proceedings of the Peace-Athabasca Delta Symposium, Edmonton, 1971, p. 169.

2. Cremetchip Assoc., Aug. 9, 1965. "Brief on Commercial Fishing in the Chipewyan Area" to the Special Legislative Committee on Canadian Fishing, A.V.M.

3. Moncrieff, Montgomery & Assocs. "A Socio-Economy Study of Fort Chipewyan, the Peace-Athabasca Delta, and Lake Athabasca Region" in Supporting Studies, Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, pp. B51, B52.

4. G.R. Seymour. A Geographical Study of the Commercial Fishing Industry in Northern Saskatchewan: An Example of Resource Development, Unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1971, p. 51.

5. F. Ladouceur, in Proceedings of the Public Hearings on the Peace-Athabasca Delta, Envt. Conserv. Authority, Edmonton, 1973, p. 299.

6. Cremetchip Assoc. op.cit.

7. Technical Report., P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, p. 92.

8. Moncrieff, Montgomery & Assocs. op.cit., p. B53.

9. Pers. comm. R.B. Mitchell, Superintendant, Wood Buffalo/Nahanni National Parks, Fort Smith, Feb. 2, 1974.

10. Northeast Alberta Road Study, Alta. Dept. of Hwys., Edmonton, 1968, p. 38.

11. W. Gilchrist, Jan. 29, 1968, "Uranium Demand Predicted," The Star Phoenix, Saskatoon, p. 3.

12. Pers. comm. Hirondelle, Recruitment officer, Dec. 6, 1973.

13. Montcrieff Montgomery & Assocs. op.cit., p. B68.

14. Pers. comm. M. Mattern, Employment and Relocation Counsellor, Saddle Lake/Athabasca District, D.I.A.N.D., Fort McMurray, Oct. 1973.

15. T. Lloyd, "The Mackenzie Waterway: A Northern Supply Route," Geogr. Review, Vol. 33, 1943, p. 417.

16. Northeast Alberta Road Study, Alta. Dept. of Highways, Edmonton, 1968, p. 16.

17. C. Mair in J.W. Garvin (ed.) Through the Mackenzie Basin by Charles Mair. Vol. 14 of Master-Works of Canadian Authors. Toronto, 1926, p. 368.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNITY AT PRESENT

Population Characteristics

Although Fort Chipewyan is the oldest community in the Province, it is only in the last few decades that it has grown to a size comparable with settlements in the south. Only in the last few years has a sense of community existed amongst its residents. In the north "the ethnicity of settlements reflects the degree of economic development. Generally, the more developed areas contain a high proportion of whites .... while the converse is true for the less developed areas."[1] This generalization holds true for Fort Chipewyan and its environs where the white population is numerically insignificant. Although the fur trade was once a profitable economic activity for the Europeans, there is now very little economic development.

Table 9-1 shows the demographic trends in and around Fort Chipewyan for the past three decades. Ennumeration Area 465 to the N. E. and S.E. of Fort Chipewyan has had a marked decline over the past decade, and even the small community of Fort Fitzgerald has decreased. Between 1951 and 1955, three lumber mills were established in Wood Buffalo National Park explaining the 400% increase in population between 1951 and 1956 for E.N. 466. However, Swanson's mill at Sweetgrass landing closed in the late 1960's accounting for the reduction in population, although the new site for the mill is also in the Park.

The most marked trend has been the growth of Fort Chipewyan since 1956. The 1956 population was 304, the lowest point in its 20th century history, reflecting the availability of employment to the east in the Saskatchewan mining industry. Fort Chipewyan's expansion since then is partly due to the influx of trappers from the surrounding countryside and partly to its

Table 9-1

Total Population Change in Sub-region, 1941 - 1971

Ennumeration Area	Years 1941	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971	% Change 51-56	56-61	61-66	66-71	61-71
465-Ft.Fitzgerald,N.E,S.E	-	-	-	370	129	55	-	-	-65.1	-57.3	-85.1
(Ft.Fitzgerald incl. in above)	(-	55	101	149	68	27)					
466-west, W.B.N.P.	42	36	143	96	231	186	-	-	140.6	-19.4	93.7
(Sweetgrass, incl. in above)	(-	-	-	-	143	18)					
Indian Reserve 201	-	-	-	74	0	0	-	-	-100	0	-100
464-Fort Chipewyan	441	466	304	717	1026	1122	-34.7	135.8	43.1	9.3	56.4

Source: Statistics Canada (D.B.S.)

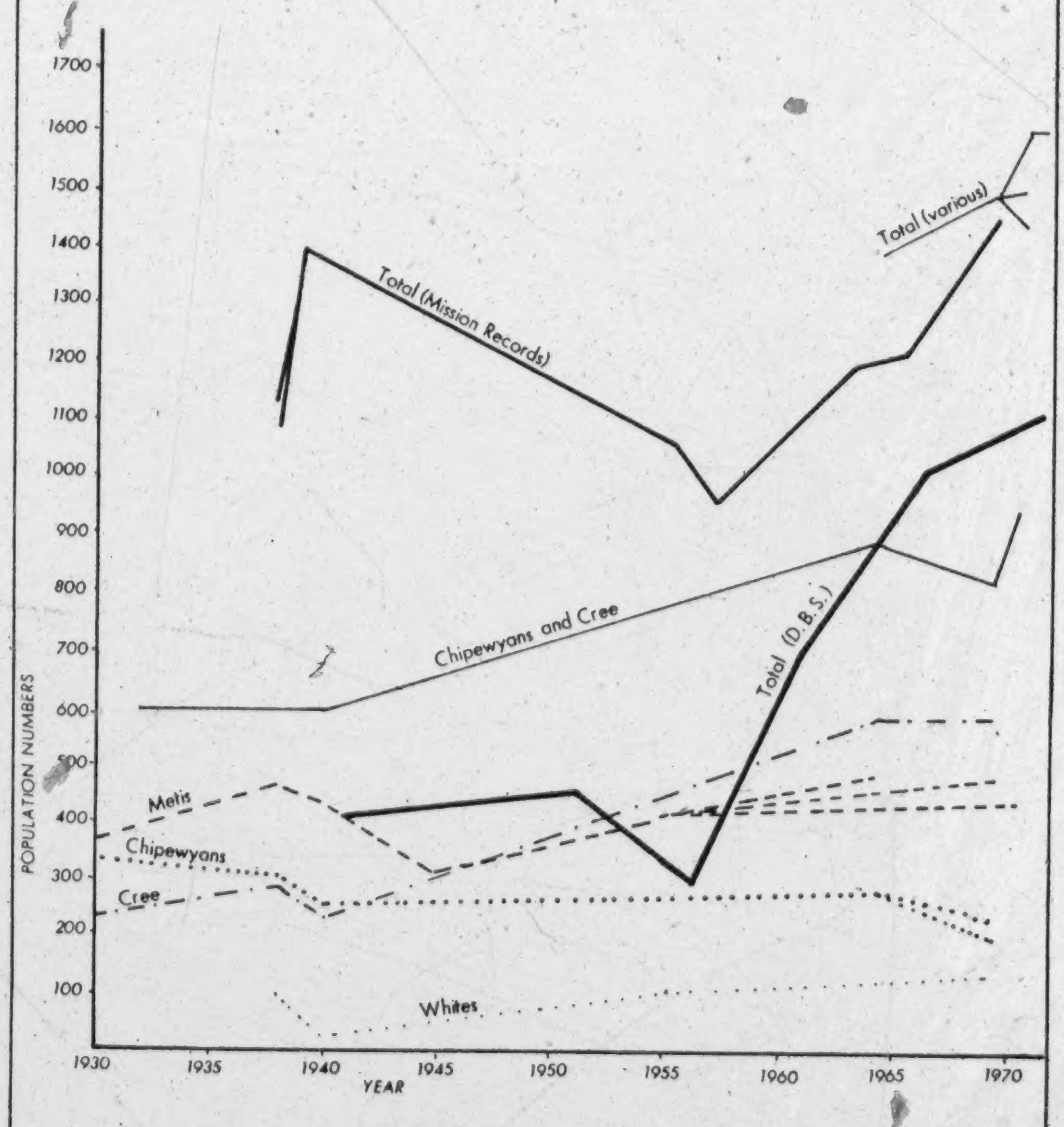
rate of population growth.

Figure 31 records local population counts from varying sources,[2] regardless of discrepancies. A noticeable feature is that the D.B.S. census is considerably less than the local counts. Possibly many resident families would have been out in summer camps by the date of census, (May 31/June 1, 1971). Fort Chipewyan is not incorporated, and so has no legal limits, and the settlement boundary has possibly varied considerbly. The main local records have been kept by the churches, and they included in their counts all the surrounding people who had a dwelling of any kind in Fort Chipewyan, or who visited the settlement regularly. Significantly, the population trends on figure 32 are quite similar.

The population pyramids on figure 32 show the age groupings for the population of the settlement for the years 1961, 1966 and 1971. The large 0-4 cohort in 1961 and 1966 indicates a very high fertility rate. The cohorts decrease in size with age increase, giving a pyramid similar to those of developing countries.[4] In 1971, the 0-4 cohort contains a relatively smaller percentage of the population, with about 13% rather than 18% or 19%

figure 31

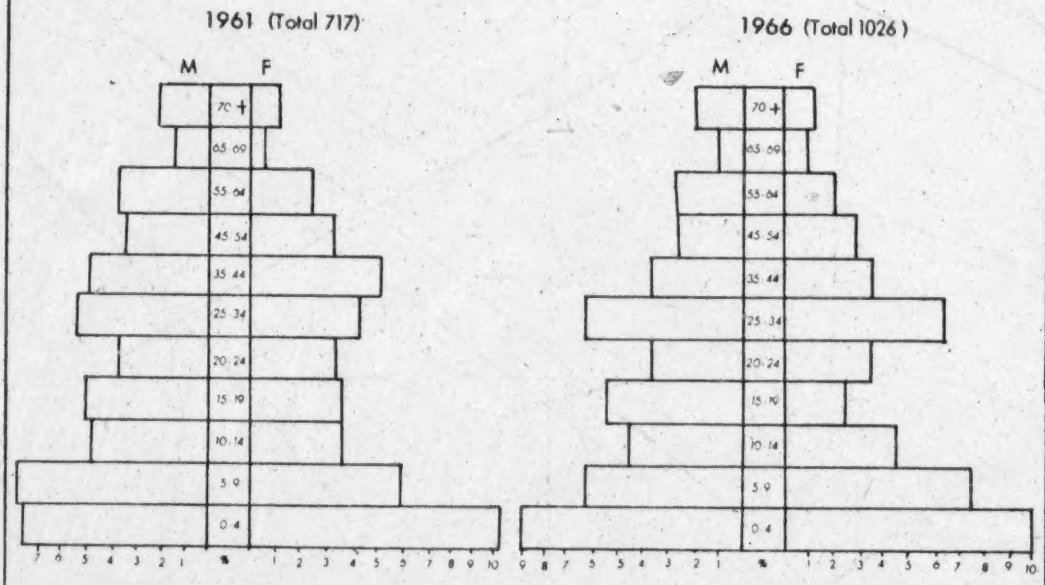
TOTAL POPULATION IN FORT CHIPEWYAN AND ETHNIC SUBDIVISIONS



Source Compiled from diverse sources

figure 32

FORT CHIPEWYAN POPULATION PYRAMIDS, 1961, 1966, 1971



Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics

as in 1961 and 1966.

The birth rate has decreased in the last few years. The fact that such a decrease might occur was overlooked in a recent Study of Fort Chipewyan where it was "assumed that trends evident in the five-year period between 1961 and 1966" would continue until 1971, "and will for some time in the future" this explains the large discrepancy between the actual and predicted population for 1970.[5]

While there is a decrease in the growth rate of the population, the total is certainly still rising, and a significant proportion of the present population will be moving into the child-bearing age-bracket in five to 15 years. That fact, combined with a continued trend of immigration from outlying areas, will virtually ensure high population levels in the next decade or two.

Employment

Table 9-2 shows the potential labour force over the last decade, and indicates that it has decreased by 11.6% of the total population. An increasing proportion of the population is dependent on the potential labour force.

The actual labour force (table 9-3) is much smaller than the potential. Figures are only available for 1961, but it is evident that only 52.3% of the potential labour force is actually working, representing only 26.5% of the population. The male and female potential is almost equal, however, in 1961, only 30 females were working (0.4% of the total population).

Table 9-4 indicates the small number whose jobs involve direct wage earnings (21.6% of the labour force), and the larger number of self-employed individuals. Only 31 (10%), work on a regular daily and weekly basis. Since only 12.5% of the labour force reported their earning, the high

Table 9-2

Potential Labour Force, Male, Female, 1961-71 (15-65 years)

Year	Potential Male L.F.	% Total Population	Potential Female L.F	% Total Population	Ratio Potential Males to Population
1961	193	26.9	170	23.7	1:2.7
1966	226	22.9	230	22.4	1:3.3
1971	243	20.8	205	18.2	1:3.7

Source: Statistics Canada (D.B.S.)

Table 9-3

Actual Labour Force as a Proportion of Population

Year	Total Population	Potential L.F.	Actual L.F.	Actual L.F. as % Population	Ratio of L.F. to Population
1961	717	363	190	26.5	1:2.7
1966	1,026	456			
1971	1,122	448			

Source: Statistics Canada (D.B.S.)

Table 9-4

Labour Force by Class or Worker, Wage Earner by Earnings

	Total 15-65 yrs	Wage Earner	Self empl'd	Unpaid	35 - hrs.p.week 40-52 wks.p.yr.	W.E.'s reporting total earnings	Average Earnings
Male	187	56	90	4	26	30	2,984
Female	123	11	25	29	5	9	2,400
Total	310	67	115	33	31	39	2,878

Source: Statistics Canada (D.B.S.)

average wage earnings is inapplicable to the whole labour force, and probably represents the income of the regularly employed wage-earners. In fact, the average per capita level of earned income in Fort Chipewyan dropped from an estimated $ 526.00 in 1965 to $ 360.00 in 1970. This compares poorly with Alberta's average of $ 2,400.00 +.[6]

Figure 33 gives an estimate of the impact which the various income-producing activities have on the people of Fort Chipewyan. The seasonal aspect of employment makes the problem of low wages even worse. As the people themselves say,

> "sure, people will tell you one of our men who made much money in one day, but what about the many other days he caught no fish and still is eating and paying for gas and oil at high costs."[7]

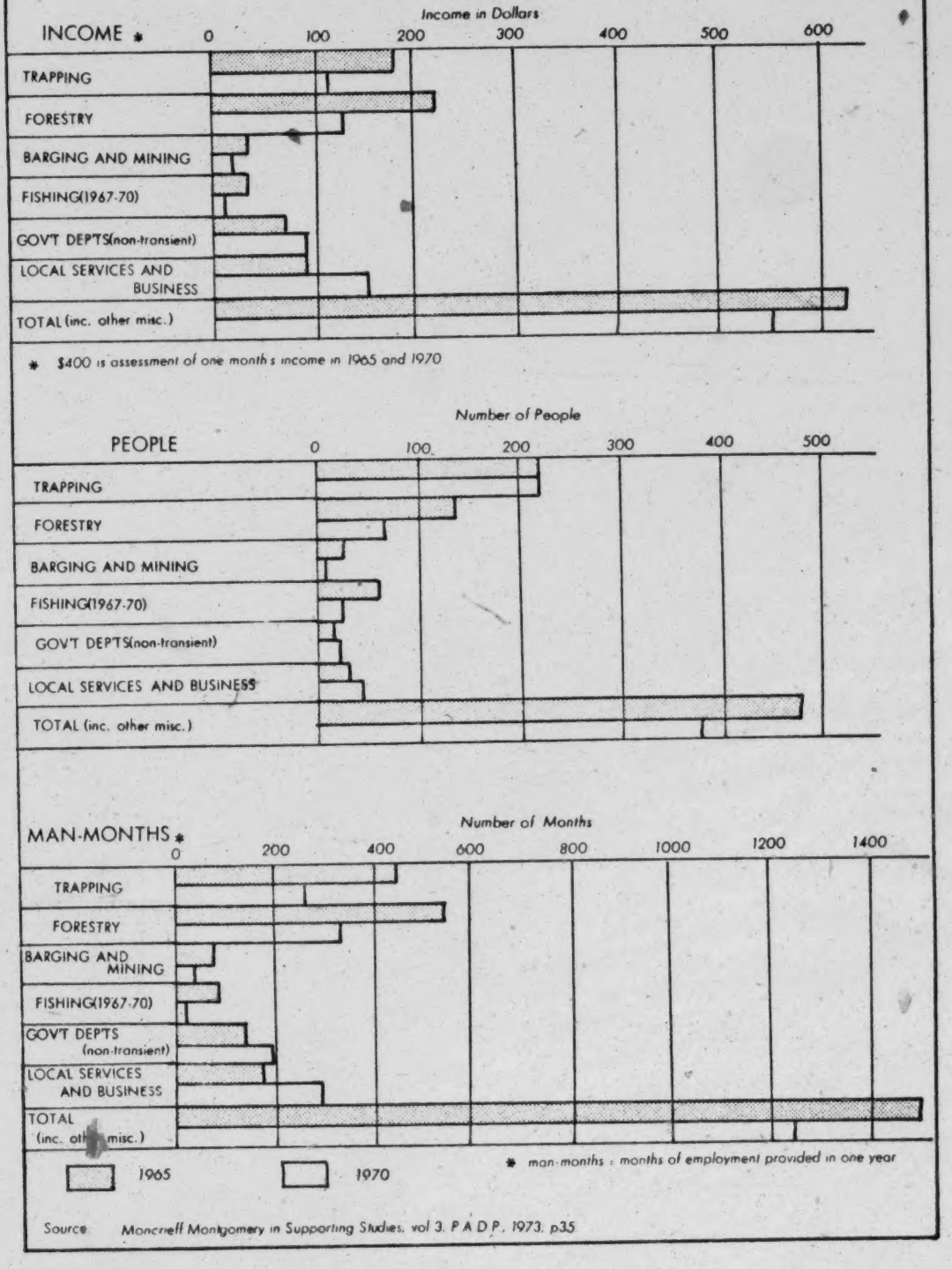
Education

Despite the recent unsettled administrative history of Bishop Piché School (the Roman Catholic Indian School) the standards achieved by the pupils have advanced rapidly in the last 25 years. " ... in 1950 many students entered school for 2 years and returned to the trapline. When a student reached Grade Six the parents decided they had it made."[8] Gradually the number of pupils, and grades attained increased. In 1950, only four teachers were employed; now there are 20. In addition, there are three teacher aides, a native-crafts teacher, typist, and two education counsellor aides, who are all natives, and with whom the pupils can readily identify.

Although many natives have moved into the settlement and their children attend school, some children still leave school to help their parents in subsistence activities at certain periods of the year. During spring hunt, attendance is only 75% for the treaty children and 85% for non-treaty.[9] Similarly in September, many children are at fish camp or in their summer camps and come to school when fishing is over. Nearly all the

figure 33

MAJOR INCOME PRODUCING AND EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE IN FORT CHIPEWYAN AREA (1965 AND 1970)



Source Moncrieff Montgomery in Supporting Studies, vol 3, P A D P, 1973, p35

natives also go fowling in fall for a couple of weeks, up to 40 miles from the settlement, either for a two-week period, or for three to five days at a time.[10]

One of the greatest problems in the school is the very high drop-out rate. Of all those attaining Grade 9 between 1967 and 1971, 38% dropped out at the end of Grade 9, 26% continued to attend school, 11% completed Grade 12, 4% completed vocational training, 18% dropped out in Grades 10, 11, 12, at places outside Fort Chipewyan and 3% died.[11] The problem is exacerbated by the large gap between both parental and student aspirations and their achievements, since 85% of the students expect to finish Grade 12.[12] The dropout rate is probably closely related to the fact that students have to leave the settlement to be educated beyond Grade 9, although they and their parents want all highschool education to be in Fort Chipewyan. Besides this, neither the students nor their parents can see much relevance in continuing a "white man's education" as there are few opportunities to apply it within the settlement.

Education is a major force for social change. The school system has given students at Fort Chipewyan new values and aspirations. However, the socio-economic problems and prospects of Fort Chipewyan, and the way of life of the community, juxtaposed with a Canadian education, have brought conflict between the generations.

> "The young generation of natives faces a difficult future. They can either strive for new occupations which require different social roles from those of the past, or fit into the existing but crumbling native social structure based on hunting and trapping."[13]

Those individuals who can successfully compete in the south are the natural leaders of their community. However, if they do choose to go to jobs 'outside,' there will be a tremendous loss of effective leadership to

the community. "Under these circumstances, the forces of social change seem determined to strand the next generation of Chipewyans geographically, socially and economically."[14]

Adult Training and Upgrading

There are a great number of inadequately or completely uneducated adult natives in Fort Chipewyan. In 1961, 78% of the population of 717 were not attending school, yet 280 of these had had no schooling whatsoever, (39.9% of the population). A further 29% of these had stopped their schooling in the elementary stages. Six years later in 1967, "72.1% of the population over 20 years of age had no training or saleable skill whatsoever, and 45.5% of the family heads had no formal education at all."[15]

In order to combat these problems, Alberta NewStart Inc. went into Fort Chipewyan in 1967, when they reported a welfare population of about 50% of the total population of the area. They provided academic upgrading and basic life skills training in preparation for the Fort McMurray Accelerated Vocational Centre. The NewStart program trained natives in skills such as heavy-equipment operation, maintenance and repairs, welding, and other vocations primarly related to northern-type work, but with no possibility of local application of these skills. Meaningful job training was not provided. Trainees had the option of leaving the area or remaining idle in the settlement.

In 1971, the unsuccessful Alberta NewStart program was closed, yet meaningful adult education is still needed and wanted. The natives themselves formed the Kiwitinok Association and asked for a chance to improve themselves and to create better economic prospects within the community. Adult training programs were opened in October, 1973 in Bishop Piché School, with all levels being taught from illiterates to High School correspondence levels.

It was 'outsiders' who first brought formal education to Fort Chipewyan and then provided incentives for the natives to live in the settlement and send their children to school. However, the movement has left many natives jobless. Educational training has been towards skills which are meaningless for jobs in Fort Chipewyan, both for children and adults.

Settlement Facilities

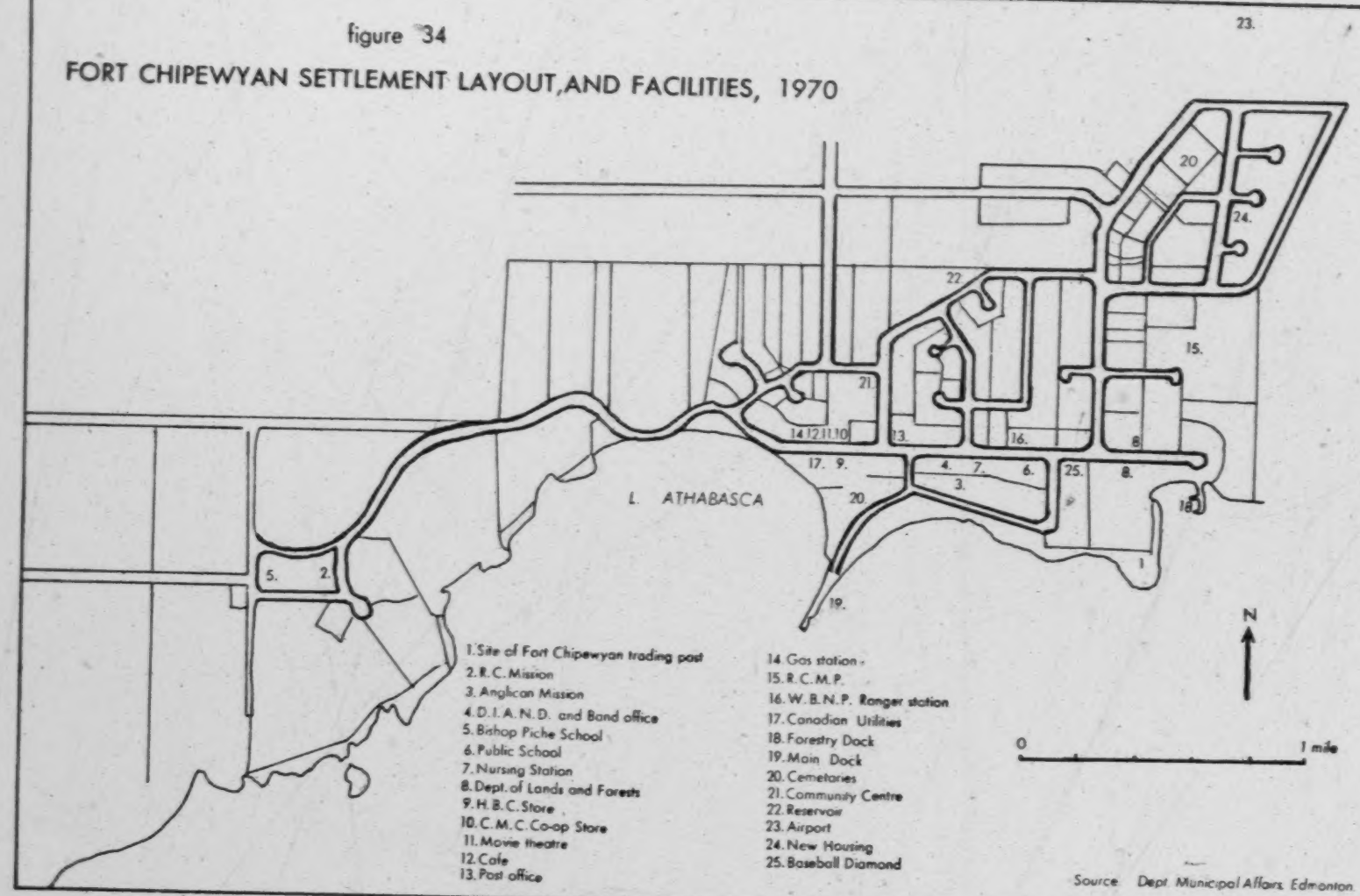
Prior to the 1960's, Fort Chipewyan had practically no service infrastructure. It was only in 1959 that electric lights were installed in some houses, but at that time, it had no road (1965), no cars, no telephone (1962), no airport (1962), no cinema, no street lights, no restuarant, no adequate school and gymnasium (1960), no fuel service and no taxi service. Unless the natives used the relatively expensive charter float 'planes, contact with the outside was by boat in summer and dogteam in winter.[16]

In the last decade, a great number of modern conveniences were acquired in a relatively short period of time, which greatly strengthened the settlement's attraction for the natives. (see fig. 34). The subsequent movement into Fort Chipewyan created problems in settlement planning. Newcomers tended to pitch a tent or build on any space which suited them. The hamlet could have been described more accurately as an agglomeration than a settlement. Landowners were confused about the exact boundaries of their lots and there was no surveyed space for expansion. By 1969, the Department of Municipal Affairs had surveyed and laid out the community as a regular townsite with surveyed lots, key-hole crescents, and main streets, and a road was built within the settlement.

Fort Chipewyan residents feel that other facilities should be available to them. In the early 1960's, a doctor came to the settlement only once a month for half a day. Now he comes every two weeks, but they feel

figure 34

FORT CHIPEWYAN SETTLEMENT LAYOUT, AND FACILITIES, 1970



Source: Dept. Municipal Affairs, Edmonton

that the service could be improved, especially since in the 1930's the settlement used to have a resident doctor. They think "there is a definite need for a hospital and a doctor in a community of this size."[17]

The Hudson's Bay Company originated the mail service into Fort Chipewyan. In 1965, the Company Manager was handling the mail in an unethical manner.

> "The Manager, who is also the Post Manager, recognising cheques from outside appearance, not only uses this knowledge in his credit operations, but actually withholds cheques especially Family Allowance, and these not always as an agreed collateral safeguard."[18]

It was only recently, 26 November 1967, that the Post Office was housed in a separate building with a local as Post Master.

One of the much-needed services lacking in the settlement is a bank. Several banks have considered the community but say it has not enough money flow. However, the natives have great problems in cashing cheques.[19] Besides this, they find it difficult to obtain loans outside the community[20] and so cannot finance a new enterprise so that the vicious circle of a small tax base continues. Only a small part of the community is served by piped water, and there are no piped or trucked sewage facilities. These services, as well as television and a road to the settlement are repeatedly requested.

Although certain services may be lacking at the moment, the number of amenities has increased enormously in the last 15 years, but have largely been confined to the eastern segment of the settlement. Those houses around the R.C. Mission and to the west have no services. It is not economically feasible to extend services three miles to the east and west in order to encompass every dwelling.

The recent activity by outsiders in Fort Chipewyan in the last two decades has resulted in rapid settlement growth, and the addition of

numerous facilities. Most government agencies have been stationed in the settlement since 1950, attracting many previous bush-dwelling natives to permanent or semi-permanent settlement residence. This has led to the need for an improved settlement infrastructure, which has in turn provided further attractions for bush dwellers. The fact that the residents are now demanding settlement facilities comparable with southern towns has resulted in concentration of the services and amenities in one segment of the community, so that more efficient service allocation is possible. It is anticipated that if trends in population growth and settlement expansion continue, necessity will dictate that it is this 'core' area which will be the focus of further growth.

Footnotes

1. R.M. Bone in R.M. Bone (ed.), "The Chipewyan of the Stony Rapids Region," Mawdsley Memoir no. 1, Inst. for Northern Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1973, p. 23.

2. Sources are Anglican Archives; Archives of the Vicarat of Mackenzie; Dominion Bureau of Statistics; Supporting Studies, Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973.

3. Trocellier to Hon. Aalborg, Min. of Education, March 5, 1955, A.V.M.; White, 1938, A.A., A420/13b.

4. After the age of 24 years, age groupings are by 10-year rather than 5-year cohorts, which masks this pyramid form.

5. Moncrieff, Montgomery & Assocs. "A Socio-Economic Study of Fort Chipewyan, the Peace-Athabasca Delta and the Lake Athabasca Region," in Supporting Studies, Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, p. B30, -The Study predicted 1,600 population for the settlement in 1970, p. B26.

6. Technical Report, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, p. 95.

7. Chipewyan, Cree, Métis Leaders to Premier Manning, May 30, 1963, A.V.M.

8. Pers. comm. Sister Brady, Principal, Bishop Piché School, Fort Chipewyan, October, 1973.

9. Ibid.

10. Pers. comm. J. Stonehocker, Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, Zone Manager, Nov. 23, 1973.

11. Pers. comm. Brady, op.cit.

12. R. Bryce, G. McIntosh, J. Hodgkins, Secondary Education at Fort Chipewyan, Report for Cree and Chipewyan Bands and D.I.A., Edmonton, Aug. 21, 1972, p. 9.

13. Bone, op.cit., p. 68.

14. Ibid., p. 66.

15. P.G. Dixon, "Local Society and Economy of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta," in E.R. Reinelt, (ed.), Proceedings of the Peace-Athabasca Delta Symposium, Edmonton, 1971, p. 25.

16. E.R. Bhajan, Community Development Programs in Alberta: Analysis of Development Efforts in Five Communities. Unpub., M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1972, p. 58.

17. Mrs. L. Mercredi, Women's Voice of Fort Chipewyan, Proceedings of the Public Hearings on the Restoration of Water Levels in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, Envt. Conserv. Authority, Edmonton, 1973, p. 64.

18. Cremetchip Assoc. to D. Hunter, Liberal Candidate, Nov. 3, 1965, A.V.M.

19. F. Ladouceur, Hearings, op.cit., pp. 299, 300.

20. J. Carbery, ibid., p. 82.

CHAPTER X

PRESENT ROLES OF GOVERNMENT

For the first half of the 20th century, the government had very little contact with the northern natives and its attitude was one of neglect. Expenditures in the north were the minimum required to fulfil treaty obligations and certainly none preceeded the demand for them.[1] Government policy aimed at leaving the native peoples and lands alone so that they might continue in their traditional way of life.

After World War II a revision of northern policies took place, with the government taking a more active and interested part in northern affairs. Since then its impact has been considerable. It is the government which provides much of the income and employment in Fort Chipewyan, government personnel play a leading part in community affairs, and policies directly affect the natives.

Government Employment

One of the beneficial effects of the recent increases in number of both federal and provincial government agencies in the settlement, is that local employment had been provided. (see table 10-1). Eighteen (38%) of the 47 employees are local. Wages are more unequally distributed, however. The locals received only 26% of the total of $ 246,400.00 in 1970. That the locals have the lower-paid jobs is no doubt due to their lack of education and skills in such a job market. Despite this, a substantial monthly income ($466.) is provided, which compares favourably with the earnings of other members of the community.

Fire-fighting provides part-time summer employment. However, the total income from this source is quite unpredictable since it varies with the fire season. It is very irregular, but is an important supplementary

Table 10-1

Federal and Provincial Government Employment of Local and Transient Persons, Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, 1970

Government Agency	Number of Employees		Man-Months Produced		Est. Income Produced (000$)		Total No. of Employees	Total Man-Months	Total Income (000 $)
	L*	T	L	T	L	T			
Federal									
D.I.A.N.D.	3	-	36	-	14.4	-	3	36	14.4
Min. of Transport	-	5	-	60	-	50.0	5	60	50.0
Health & Welfare	2	4	24	48	6.0	28.8	6	72	34.8
R.C.M.P.	-	2	-	24	-	19.2	2	24	19.2
Post Office	2.5	-	30	-	12.0	-	2.5	30	12.0
National Parks	1	1	12	12	6.0	9.6	2	24	15.6
Dept. of Public Works	3	-	15	-	20.0	-	3	15	20.0
Sub-total	11.5	12.0	117	144	58.4	107.6	23.5	261	166.0
Provincial									
Lands & Forests	2	2	24	24	12.0	20.0	4	48	32.0
Education	4	15	48	150	19.0	127.0	19	198	146.0
Local (Utilities)	0.5	-	6	-	2.4	-	0.5	6	2.4
Total	18.0	29.0	195	318	91.8	254.6	47	513	346.4

* L - Local, T - Transient.

Source: Local Survey of Departments, Supporting Studies, Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., 1973, p. B63.

summer wage and helps diminish the number of welfare recipients.

Public Support

The government creates a flow of unearned income into the community - that of social aid to individuals in need. Programs under federal control include unemployment insurance, family allowances and old age security. Provincial programs include workmen's compensation, and mother's allowances. Joint programs include old age assistance, disabled persons allowance and rehabilitation programs.

Until World War II, Indians had been excluded from welfare programs, although the responsibility of the Federal Government. Even after that time Indians were treated differently since it was supposed that welfare increases would be a disincentive to work. In Fort Chipewyan, "Indians don't want welfare,"[2] since accompanying welfare is a "loss of pride and self-respect, to say nothing of the poor living conditions and other social problems."[3]

Despite the attitude of the natives, welfare payments have been increasing, and certain types of traditional work have declined. The availability of unearned income has often been substituted for other types of income with small returns, and has undoubtedly contributed to the decline of trapping in the area. However, this substitution of payments is not entirely the result of the availability of funds, rather it reflects the deterioration and inadequacy of the economic base of the community. The resource base as presently developed is unable to provide the indigenous population as a whole with adequate income or living standards. The combination of population pressure and the limited production potential of the traditional employment pattern has undermined the viability of the community, forcing it to rely increasingly upon government assistance.

Table 10-2

Total Social Assistance to Fort Chipewyan Area Residents ($000)
1966-67 to 1970-71 with Projection to March 31, 1972

	Provincial		Federal		Total	
Year	Av.no.p.mth.	Tot.$	Av.no.p.mth.	Tot.$	Av.no.p.mth.	Tot.$.
1966-67	70	19.3	530	79.8	600	99.1
1967-68	80	22.6	410	99.6	490	122.2
1968-69	110	33.3	380	99.5	490	132.9
1969-70	120	37.8	380	100.6	500	138.3
1970-71	118	51.6	400	99.6	518	151.2
1971-72	160	76.2	540	140.0	700	216.0

Source: Estimates provided by the Departments, in Supporting Studies, Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., 1973, pB 80.

Table 10-2 shows that assistance from the province has increased by 300% in the five-year period to 1970-71, and Federal assistance has increased by about 80%. While the number of people assisted each month by the province has increased sharply, the number assisted by Federal sources has remained fairly constant. However in 1972, Federal assistance for the 540 people constituted roughly 55% of the Treaty Indian population.[4]

In 1967, 46.9% of the household heads earned less than $ 500.00 p.a. outside assistance. For the same year the average welfare payments for each family amounted to $ 494.00 p.a.[5] These payments closely rival each other. Many criticisms have been levelled at the native in receipt of assistance, but his preference for this to trapping is not necessarily laziness. He is facing the economic reality of the greater net income which social assistance offers.

The government has attempted to overcome this problem by creating work programs, yet "the rapid increase in welfare payments shows that the problems are growing despite the number of governments with programs in the area."[6] The danger of subsidies to the community in the form of welfare, is that they may tend to perpetuate the very conditions that made aid necessary in the first place.

Payments to unemployed people all over Canada are very common, so that the existence of social assistance in Fort Chipewyan is not an unusual phenomenon. However, it is the proportion of the total population involved, and the very large proportion of such unearned to earned income, that causes concern. Unfortunately, with the population structured so that the largest percentage is in the youngest age brackets, many people will soon be entering the welfare age brackets. Unless something positive is done to help the economic base of the community, the situation will become far worse, and a permanent welfare situation may result.

Community Development

In 1964, Alberta's Community Development Program was initiated, in the hope that welfare rates in native communities would be reduced and that natives would be enabled to merge into Canada's economic and social mainstream. The main objective of the program in Fort Chipewyan "was to be adult education and economic development."[7] However, the role of the Community Development Officer was never fully understood, and his initial efforts in the community were met with little enthusiasm.

The trapping way of life had involved native families living on the traplines for a large part of the year, so it was the outsiders in Fort Chipewyan who carried the power and decision-making roles. Native dependence on them had evolved, and no true native leaders had the chance to emerge.

The C.D.O., of necessity, took a prominant role in the creation of the Cremetchip Association. One of the Association's first schemes was that of having the settlement re-plotted. Financial problems arose between the Department of Municipal Affairs and the local co-operative, but by dealing with the Department as a united front, the natives overcame the problems. Although the matter was of no great import, it was significant

in that the whole community saw how local native organizations could be victorious when united to a common end.

Co-operatives

In 1966, a co-operative was opened to keep prices down and it gave a 60% advance on the estimated cost of furs. The establishment of such a co-op store selling goods to members, was a good idea in many ways. It created competition for the H.B.C. store, helped to lower prices, and by returning yearly dividends on the profits, its patrons could be expected to gain a little financially.

Other social benefits may accrue to the local people who direct and manage the business and also to the members who participate in its affairs. However, there is a tendency to expect that a native co-op will work miracles. In fact, the economic and social objectives conflict. To obtain maximum returns, efficient management is required, but is not achieved if the members are involved in a training or educational basis in the business.

The Athabasca Fishing Co-operative was started in 1967, but the members had no idea how to conceive, organize and manage a project of co-operative scale, and little success was achieved as most members fished individually. A series of internal problems, often of a trivial nature, and related to bad planning, bad organization and misunderstandings, beset the fishing co-op for the next few years.

A major problem has been lack of capital and equipment necessary to initiate a fishing operation on a competitive basis. The large U.S. fish market is notoriously unstable, and the unpredictability of returns and of market prices combine to cause problems for the fishermen. Transportation to distant markets is also an obstacle as the various methods are either uneconomical or result in a number of culls because of lengthy journeys.

In the past, large fishing companies have dominated the fishing and processing scene, making all the profits, and often employing outsiders, "since fishing appears to be one of the few resources in this rather isolated area, we are at this point forced by necessity to consider fishing as an expanding and growing opportunity."[9] This is one of the areas of economic development where the government could have taken more positive steps in the early stages of development , in financial and advisory spheres.

Mobility and Migration

Natives belonging to Fort Chipewyan have been very mobile for centuries. The distance of movement has decreased over the last two centuries, accompanied by more frequent visits to the settlement and leading to permanent settlement residence. Yet seasonal movements to the bush for occupational reasons are still part of the way of life of the people, although much reduced in scale. Movements to the outside world are undertaken by fewer natives and by a much higher proportion of outsiders - mainly government personnel.

A new form of native mobility has developed over the last few decades. Individuals or families may temporarily seek wage employment in nearby towns. However, these moves are usually on a very short-term basis, and high wages do not necessarily keep the men on the job. Other reasons for movement are highschool or vocational training at Fort Smith, Fort McMurrary or Edmonton, but short-term visits have been common in this sphere too. In the past, programs to send students to high school have had up to 100% failure rates.

In the employment sphere, too, relocation schemes have had high failure rates. Mobility to the Fort Chipewyan natives is only common around and centred on the settlement. They live in a spatially restricted society, where

> " ... life is restricted to a local area, reflecting the populations's close ties to the land and the poor state of its transportation system.... Any migration tends to be circular - ending back in the home village - and motivated largely by a desire to find either brides outside the village or perhaps temporary work, or because of social reasons."[10]

The government has played a large role in authorizing native movements outside the region. It pays for travel expenses incurred in going to high school, vocational training, hospital, sanitorium and sometimes employment. Since the destination is generally predetermined by the purpose of movement (McMurray for vocational training, Fort Smith for high school, Edmonton for medical facilities), the movement is not usually geographically random. Because of the expense, movements outside are infrequent, unless government sponsored, and thus the government is playing a key role in this critical exposure of the natives to Canadian life, despite their lack of true mobility.

Transiency

An attempt was made to try to determine the degree of transiency of outsiders by means of a questionnaire. Table 10-3 shows that 49.9% initially anticipated staying for less than two years. At the time of survey, 72.9% of the outsiders had been in Fort Chipewyan for less than a year, (table 10-4) and many had arrived within the previous two weeks. Table 10-5 shows the outsiders to have changed their length of residency intentions, after having spent some time in Fort Chipewyan. A remarkably large number (23%) intended to leave within three months, and many others (32.6%) intended to leave within a year. Thus 55.6% of the outsiders decided to leave within a year, as compared with the 11.4% who intended to do this before they arrived. The trend is overwhelmingly towards a shorter stay in the community than previously intended (table 10-6). Certainly, as a group, the outsiders intend to stay for less time in Fort Chipewyan than they did

Table 10-3

Initial Intended Lengths of Residence at Fort Chipewyan

Time	Number	%
<3m	1	3.8
3-6m	-	-
6-12m	2	7.6
1-2y	10	38.5
2-5y	4	15.3
No definite time	9	34.5
Other	-	-

Table 10-4

Length of Residence at Fort Chipewyan at time of Survey

Time	Number	%
<3m	12	46.1
3-6m	1	3.8
6-12m	6	23.0
1-2y	-	-
2-5y	6	23.0
Other	1	3.8

Table 10-5

Subsequent Intended Length of Residence in Fort Chipewyan

Time	Number	%
<6m	9	34.5
6-12m	1	3.8
1-2y	8	30.7
2-5y	6	23.0
All working life	1	3.8
Retire here	-	-
Other	1	3.8

Table 10-6

Altered Residency Intentions Since Arrival at Fort Chipewyan

Time	Number	%	% Change
<3m	12	23.0	+19.2
3-6m	10	19.2	+19.2
6-12m	7	13.4	+ 5.8
1-2y	8	15.3	-23.2
2-5y	12	23.0	+ 7.7
Other	3	5.7	+ 5.7

m - months
y - years

Source: Questionnaire conducted in Fort Chipewyan, July, 1973

in their previous place of residence.

Forty percent of the outsiders participate more in community affairs and organizations than they did previously, and only 12% participate less. Of the 56% who belonged to community clubs, over half belonged to more than one club, and 36% of the outsiders occupied organizational roles in the clubs. Despite the high degree of transiency, community participation among outsiders is high, contrary to Matthiasson's findings for Fort McMurray.[11]

Local Participation

Decision-making in Fort Chipewyan has been dominated by outsiders, whether on a local or policy-making scale. The natives have been aware of their increasing dependence for over a decade and have asked to be trained for independence. Unfortunately they did not know how to approach the correct agency through the government 'system' and proper channels.

The formation of the Community Development Association in the 1960's was a hopeful sign, but it could do nothing positive to develop the community without help.

> "... if a government is seriously committed to the principal of local self-government, then it has an obligation to provide services which would facilitate people to be truly self-determining. In this respect, the response of the government to the needs of the Fort Chipewyan community has been a disappointment. No one should therefore, be very surprised, though many are, at the natives for being passive, apathetic, and generally suspicious of Government intentions."[12]

The government must take positive steps to help development, as well as allow local participation in the process. It is completely unrealistic to imagine that any form of development can exist without subsidy. Capital and management are essential requirements, which in the past have been injected into the economy merely to sustain rather than develop it, and which must be supplied in far greater quantities to expand the economy.

Communication and Co-ordination

Over the last few decades, government involvement has increased to the point where there are now a plethora of departments and agencies with facilities and personnel in Fort Chipewyan. Over 30 federal and provincial agencies operate there, yet exhibit a remarkable degree of lack of co-ordination. The residents are confused and unable to communicate with them.[13] Many people are thus unaware of the programs under which they may be eligible for aid, and do not know how to proceed in finding out.[14]

That co-ordination amongst the departments is possible has been demonstrated by the successful organizing of the Peace-Athabasca Delta Project. Possibly an actual officer or agency with a specific co-ordinating role is required. In any case interdepartmental communication has to be improved. This alone could help local organizations to function more efficiently.[15]

In the past, the government had a relatively weak role in influencing the natives of Fort Chipewyan, whether at the local level or at the policy making level. However, its impact has increasingly affected the natives and dominated the impact of other outsiders. Local government representatives are highly involved in community affairs at business and social levels, but increasingly decisions which affect the natives have been made by strangers in Ottawa and Edmonton. The government must become far more involved in helping the community positively, if it is to be developed, yet must allow room for the local people to have a say in the decisions which affect their own lives.

Footnotes

1. K.J. Rea, The Political Economy of the Canadian North, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 57.

2. F. Marcel, Chipewyan chief, in The First Citizen, Ed. 13, no. 2413,

reprint from The Montreal Star, n.d. A.V.M.

3. Fort Chipewyan Society for Adult Education, to D.I.A.N.D., Jan. 23, 1973, A.V.M.

4. Technical Report, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, 1973, p. 95.

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6. D. Hornby, Edmonton Journal, Jan. 26, 1972, p. 69.

7. J.R. Whitford, Report of a Community Development Program for Alberta. Unpub., n.d., pp. 1-3.

8. Wastawin, No. 1, Oct. 3, 1966, and No. 3, Oct. 17, 1966.

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10. R.L. Morrill, The Spatial Organization of Society, Belmont, 1970, p. 23.

11. J.S. Matthiasson, Resident Mobility in Resource Frontier Communities: An Examination of Selected Factors, Centre for Settlement Studies, Series 2, Resource Reprints, no. 6, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1971, p. 16.

12. E.R. Bhajan, Community Development Programs in Alberta: Analysis of Development efforts in five communities. Unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1972, p. 80.

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14. Mrs. Fraser, Ibid., p. 68.

15. F. Forbes, Ibid., p. 209.

CHAPTER XI

FUTURE

Throughout the 19th century, the natives visited Fort Chipewyan more frequently and stayed longer, in the course of a year. In the 20th century, the settlement became a place of residence which called for readjustments in the spatial structure of resource utilization patterns. Permanent residence in Fort Chipewyan became the norm; and the wage-welfare economy has given the people an element of security not available in their hunting and trapping economy. Yet despite attenuation of the land-based way of life, large numbers of natives still trap. Clearly a "dual allegiance"[1] to bush and settlement living exists in Fort Chipewyan.

In the settlement unemployment and underemployment are chronic. Since the labour force is unable to compete in the outside job market because of its lack of skills, migration is no solution to the problem, and is not, at present, a realistic solution to unemployment in Fort Chipewyan. It is essential that short-term employment opportunities geared to the present skills of the natives be provided immediately.

SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT

It seems logical that attempts to provide employment should relate to the natural resources available in the area and should focus on Fort Chipewyan settlement. The older generation has every intention of continuing in traditional economic activities.[2] The government attitude of neglect of these activities has probably been reinforced by the many reports indicating the economically low state of the traditional activities in the north at present, leading to the conclusion that they will always be unviable.[3]

Trapping

The Fort Chipewyan natives admit that they can not live on muskrat

trapping alone, but that it can keep them independent if combined with other activities. Although all the natives cannot be supported by trapping as presently practised, this is no reason to completely neglect the economic possibilities which the fur industry offers. "Trapping is not an inherently outmoded economic pursuit."[4] It does, however, require increased trapper co-ordination, and " ... agencies must become more aware of and sympathetic to the problems of primary producers."[5]

Fur ranching is unlikely in the forseeable future at Fort Chipewyan, despite climatic and biotic factors in its favour. It needs enormous capital investment and good breeding stock, equipment, and extremely efficient operators. In short, the economic factors are far more important than in the wild fur industry, but management of the latter would be feasible with less capital input.

In 1928, the Chipewyans were anxious to become muskrat farmers. In the late 1930's, the trappers did dam a creek to increase muskrat habitat, and returns increased ten-fold.[6] In 1963, the community wanted someone to help them prepare pelts for modern markets and a few years later wanted dams built on the Chipewyan reserve to improve the rat harvest.[7] In 1971 and 1972 several dams and ditches constructed on sloughs and rivers in the reserve did successfully create muskrat habitat. Although this would be an impossibly large task for the whole delta area, muskrat management could well be used in other areas of high trapping intensity to regulate the populations.

Fishing

A definite potential exists for summer and winter commercial fishing around Fort Chipewyan. In the past, the lack of experience, capital backing and equipment has held the native fishermen back. Also communication with government agencies in legislative and financial matters was confused.

At present about 50 people are involved in various aspects of commercial fishing - in the boats, on the docks, at the processing plant and the packer. However, the potential for more workers exists, especially if a goldeye smoke fishery were to be established. The transport of fish to processing plants and thence to distant southern markets has proved to be a problem. One of the reasons for problems in the industry has been poor organization, which is not inevitably a feature to be associated with northern Indians and Métis as McIvor suggests.[9]

In 1974, it is planned that a fishing instructor will be available permanently in the community to instruct fishermen on boat maintenance and management, and on the business aspects of the operation. There will also be a mechanic, paid by the co-op, to undertake major repair work on the larger boats, ensuring that none lie idle as in 1973.[10] It is to be hoped that the fishing instructor will play a constructive role in establishing effective communications between the several government agencies concerned with various aspects of commercial fishing, and the fishermen themselves.

Timber

Swanson Lumber Co. Ltd. is the only company in the Fort Chipewyan area. However, since the mill relocation to Embarras, the number of local employees has dropped to about 35 men, although the percentage has gone up to 80% or 90%. This decrease is partly because the planing is done at Fort McMurray now, and because the sawmill is smaller than the one at Sweetgrass.[11] The natives are not so happy with the mill relocation since access to Fort Chipewyan is more difficult. No familes live at Embarras, and the men work for ten days and spend four days off at Fort Chipewyan.

Since 1963, locals have expressed an interest in having their own sawmill to provide employment for the people and to obtain wood for locally

used articles. However, the best commercially harvestable timber lies in Wood Buffalo National Park. Since the 1950's, Parks Policy has changed.

> "A prime factor in our forest management policy is that no commercial operations are permitted .... There is absolutely no intention of inadvertantly encouraging anyone to establish all or part of a wood processing plant based on the supply of wood from a National Park."[12]

A commercial timber industry is clearly not consistent with the purposes of national parks, despite its potential benefit to the community. Possibly the Cree band will wish to establish such an industry on the reserve for which they are negotiating. However at present, although the number of acres allowed is agreed upon, negotiations are unresolved with regard to reserve location.[13] It may be that the final selection of land will be strongly based on other criteria than timber considerations.

The best that can be hoped for at present is that the numbers of local employees will not decline at the Embarras sawmill. However, in 1980, the lease expires and workers will have to look toward some other employment.

Mineral Developments

To date no metallic ore deposits of significance have been found near Fort Chipewyan. However, "there is no reason to believe that economic deposits will not be found on the Shield in Alberta."[14] There are gypsum deposits exposed along the banks of the Peace River at Peace Point, but gypsum is a low cost bulk product, and transportation to southern markets is the greatest barrier to its development. A similar transportation problem faces the proposal to develop a granite quarry near the settlement. However, this project appears to be more feasible because of the demand for granite and is receiving serious consideration.

Fort Chipewyan residents have not been heavily involved in non-biological resource use, and when they have participated, employment has been in the least skilled positions. Not many natives have shown an interest in relocating to Fort McMurray where jobs at G.C.O.S. are available; they want work at Fort Chipewyan.[15] It is difficult to see what industry associated with the Athabasca oil sands can be set up in Fort Chipewyan. It might, however, be possible to utilize the commuter concept as applied at Embarras Sawmill, where workers at McMurray spend four off-days at Fort Chipewyan after ten days on the job. Other than this sort of arrangement, mineral developments outside Fort Chipewyan cannot benefit the community to any extent.

MEDIUM-TERM EMPLOYMENT

There is a great need for development in new and diversified economic areas, since the resource base as presently developed is extremely narrow. Developments must look towards emerging regional opportunities and fit in with these.

Tourism

Tourism is the only biotic related industry to grow in the north in the last decade. The mainstay of any tourist industry to be developed would be the natural resources of the Peace-Athabasca Delta and environs, since the area's greatest asset is the variety of natural resources. The potential for such an industry certainly exists, although Fort Chipewyan's lack of communications with the south other than by air has discouraged tourism. However this very isolation may be seen as an asset in tourist industries, and positively developed.

Visitation of Wood Buffalo National Park is increasing. In 1972-73 there were 1,156 paid visitors to the Pine Lake Campsite, and 1973-74

there were 2,534 campers, an increase of 210%. In addition, 856 others used the group camping facilities and there were about 1,800 day-use visitors, but "the potential for visitor use is much higher than the above figures indicate."[16]

Comparison with developments in Saskatchewan may guide future proposals. An average of 1,200 tourists annually visit six fly-in sports fishing camps near Lake Athabasca. They pay $ 50 - $ 100+ a day. The camps have been operating an average of 15 years in an area with some identical natural resources to those of the Fort Chipewyan area. Local natives are directly involved - 57 natives (48%) earn about $ 15.00 a day.[17]

The area to the northeast of Fort Chipewyan and south of the lake would be ideal for similar tourist camps. The small lakes offer a wide variety of settings for "non-consumptive" activities. These have the advantage of being compatible with Park purposes and could be developed in the whole delta area. Sports fishing and hunting activities could only be carried on outside the park and would involve greater expenditure on camp facilities.

A co-ordinated management program would be essential for all tourist developments, including camps outside the settlement. The suggestions by natives, of developing a museum and handicrafts centre through L.I.P. projects would be a good small beginning for a tourist development. One building could accomodate a museum, historical, cultural and Indian crafts displays, and a handicraft workshop and sales outlet.

At present there is virtually no tourist activity. Smith sees opportunities for a "sharply expanded tourist industry."[18] However, while expansion is possible on many fronts, sharp expansion would be unwise. Developments require co-ordination in all areas, between the locals,

experienced tourist operators, and officials. Hand in hand with this should go market research and promotion. It seems logical that steps in these directions should be thoroughly planned, with modest initial goals.

Fish-Processing

Local people have expressed considerable desire to have a fish-processing plant at Fort Chipewyan separate from the one at Crackingstone Point. However, this would involve large capital costs. Federal government policy precludes supporting secondary fishing operations, and it feels that two plants on Lake Athabasca could not be economically supported.[19]

On the other hand it would provide employment opportunities and a reliable income for roughly 20 workers who would obtain different skills. The number of fishermen would be increased because the fish harvest would have to justify the plant's existence. At least 80 people could be employed in the total operation.[20] These social benefits must be weighed against economic expenditures by the province's officials in considering the building of such a plant.

Government Employment

It is anticipated that government involvement will increase in the settlement over the next decade. In 1970 there were 47 employees in Fort Chipewyan, but by July 1973, many of the departments had increased their staff by at least one employee. It is essential that local people are drawn into this labour force, at the rate of two or three every year.

LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT

It is almost impossible to predict the job opportunities which will be available and which should be developed, more than a decade from the present. Much depends on the direction and success of the developments

Table 11-1

Employment Potential of Short and Medium-Term Developments at Fort Chipewyan

Area of Employment	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1985
Trapping	150	150	175	200	225	250	250	300
Fishing(and Processing)	50	50	60	80	80	80	80	100
Forestry	35	38	40	40	40	40	40	0
Mining	5	8	10	12	14	16	18	25
Tourism	0	0	10	20	30	40	50	100
Government	18	20	22	25	28	31	35	45
Commuting Workers*	0	0	5	8	12	18	25	40

*other than Embarras sawmill workers.
N.B. These categories do not necessarily provide full-time employment.

over the next few years, and the degree to which they can be carried forward. Certainly the traditional resources should be more efficiently operated, but developments in other areas should prepare the people for a more diversified economy than that which now exists.

In the very long term it is anticipated that a road will be built into the community. Social and economic problems are at present exacerbated by Fort Chipewyan's lack of contact with the outside. The Highways Department undertook a road location and feasibility study in 1967.[21] One proposed route, B, joined Fort McKay and the Park road at Peace Point, going via the Athabasca River and Lake Claire. Route A followed the Athabasca River to its delta and Y'ed to the north of Fort Chipewyan. One arm joined the Fort Smith road and the other connected with Uranium City. (see fig. 30).

Although route A was the most favoured route, the economic justification for an all-weather road was not proven in the study. However, the analysis was approached from a strictly economic point of view, and the study had a great many limitations, thus results may not be conclusive.

It is not immediately imperative that a road be put into Fort Chipewyan.

However, in conjunction with developments anticipated over the next decade, a north-south road could eventually be built. A western link with Fort Vermilion would be possible, but since linkages already exist with Fort Smith and Fort McMurray (high school, vocational training) and since large-scale developments at Fort McMurray are anticipated, the north-south route seems to be the more useful one.

It is hoped that in the long-term, the effective mobility of the natives will have been increased so that migration to employment opportunities in the region will not be such a traumatic experience. That, together with job developments in the settlement over the decade, should have improved the economic and social status of the natives considerably.

Planned Regional Development

Specific unemployment situations can be tackled by a variety of means on a local scale. On the regional scale, efforts at development must improve the climate of investment for outside agencies, and incorporate local development in a regional plan. However, neither the local area nor larger regions have an overall development plan to facilitate the spatial allocation of investment funds. Thus external inputs have usually been made on an economic justification basis, with the result that little more than "holding" injections of capital and management have taken place.

Government involvement in the form of capital, equipment and management inputs must do more than maintain the status quo. The Local Advisory Board has had great difficulty in obtaining any inputs from the government as they are always told that there are not enough people to provide a big enough tax base, and so the vicious circle continues. Capital expenditure would be worthwhile if invested in a plan where economic, social and political developments were taken into account. Such policy objectives are

necessary to achieve balanced developments.

There is no alternative to the infusion of massive outside inputs into this under-developed area of northeast Alberta, within the framework of a comprehensive regional plan. It is just not possible to leave the natives alone now, as the development of other more prosperous regions leaves this area, and the natives there, in an economic vacuum. Already the natives of Fort Chipewyan have rising expectations which cannot be reversed by a policy of neglect.

Co-ordination at Federal, Provincial and Local Levels

All government agencies should be involved in the regional development plan to overcome the almost complete lack of communication between agencies which has prevailed in the past. Problems created by lack of provincial communication are evidenced by the chain of adverse reactions stemming from the construction of the Bennett Dam in British Columbia. Yet a second dam is to be built some miles below the Bennett Dam which will further reduce the flood peaks of the Peace River and endanger the Peace-Athabasca delta's resources.

Saskatchewan too, is investigating the possibility of a hydro development at the head of the Fond du Lac River on Black Lake.[22] The province feels that downstream effects will be small, since the storage capacity of the dam would be only about 3% of that of the Bennett Dam. This assumption is not necessarily true. In Alberta, a number of dams on the Peace and Athabasca Rivers have been proposed for hydro power and one to be built above Athabasca settlement is already approved. These proposals still stand despite the fact that upstream impoundments of water would probably make remedial measures on the delta obsolete. Co-ordination of regional goal planning is required at all stages so that such potential resource conflicts do not occur.

Local Inputs in the Planning and Decision-Making Process

It is essential that local people are involved in the planning process. Previous plans have all too often imposed an altered life-style on the community. Outsiders have both encouraged and enabled the natives to change their way of life over the past two centuries, and through these outside influences, many of the present problems of the community have their origins.

Much more is involved than the mere availability of wage employment. It is totally unrealistic to imagine that the sudden appearance of employment will eradicate deep-rooted problems, and social differences between outsiders and natives. Time is required for these differences to be decreased. Certainly the availability of full employment to all sectors of the community will aid in this. Economic and social development must go hand in hand.

Recently the government has been consulting with the natives more, but consultation should be replaced by negotiation. Native involvement should take place at the policy formulation level in order to give them the chance to decide what kind of life they want to lead, as well as at the implementation level. Local government or local inputs, should be upgraded and expanded immediately to meet these demands.

More effective communication with the public would allow feedback to be obtained on the progress of various programs. Thus some kind of social monitoring may take place which can gauge the impact of the programs and realise the unanticipated effects and guide their modifications. The sensitive approach required for awareness of native attitudes can only be realised through better communication. The natives should be encouraged and expected to exercise local leadership, and limited, but decisive local autonomy should be granted, encouraged and demanded by senior governments.

Footnotes

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17. E.P.E.C., "A Recreation-Tourism Study of Lake Athabasca and Environs" in Supporting Studies Vol. 3, P.A.D.P., Edmonton, .973, p.E6.

18. S.B. Smith, Hearings, op.cit., p. 30.

19. Pers. comm. Holmes, Supervisor of Economic Development and Lands, Dept. Indian Affairs, Edmonton, April 10, 1974.

20. F. Ladeuceur. Hearings, op.cit., p. 297.

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CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When the first contact agents - fur traders - came to the Athabasca District in the late 1700's, most of the Chipewyans began trading there thus avoiding the arduous journey to the east. A change in emphasis of their economic activities from subsistence hunting to trapping occurred, with an associated change of seasonal and annual movements. By the early 1800's a yearly pattern was clearly discernible. The Chipewyans followed the north shore of Lake Athabasca, making a clockwise circuit back to the fort via Reindeer Lake, Isle a laCrosse and Athabasca River.

By the mid 1800's, different population distributions and annual movements were evident. The Crees had previously spent all year around the Athabasca River, but began to move west, wintering on the Birch Mountains and summering north of there. Their hunting grounds converged on Fort Chipewyan but were further north and west than previously.

The Caribou-Eaters continued to follow the caribou north to the Barren Grounds in summer and south in winter. They were given credit at Fort Chipewyan in November, trapped furs for a short season, and traded in February or March before returning to their lands for summer. Since they travelled extensively, they resorted to the most convenient post in any one year, which might be Fort Reliance, Fort Chipewyan, Reindeer Lake or Fort Churchill.

After the 1820's, the Athabasca Chipewyans usually went no farther southeast than the Clearwater River. Winters were spent to the north, northwest and southwest of Fort Chipewyan, on the Birch and Caribou mountains. In summer they remained near the fort, hunting provisions. Their hunting grounds converged on the fort, with a decrease in the distance of

movement to the east and southeast being especially evident.

Missionaries came to Fort Chipewyan in the mid 1800's. They encouraged the natives to visit the settlement frequently, for holy days, festivals and the Sabbath, but expected them to remain in the vicinity of the mission rather than trading post. Fort Chipewyan became the nucleus for a small, semi-permanent body of natives - the old, sick, and helpless, and those who found some employment with the outsiders. The nodal function of Fort Chipewyan was reinforced and intensified by the missionaries, and a new focus of native temporary settlement was the mission.

After the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899, a new pattern was superimposed upon the natives' yearly cycle. Treaty payments were made in June or July, thus the natives made a point of visiting the fort annually at this time, although previously they would have been on provision hunts. Government subsidies of mission schooling gradually allowed more pupils to attend. The children were subjected to intensive outside culture contact, which helped reshape their values and desires. Initially few children were sent to school since the whole family worked as an economic unit in the bush. The settlement became increasingly attractive for residence throughout the 20th century because of the introduction of service functions and government administrative activities. After the introduction of Family Allowances, many natives began to live there on a permanent basis and send their children to school, thus having a regular source of cash income.

Some of the natives managed to obtain employment in the settlement with the outsiders. This increased their income and ability to procure material goods, and thus their desire for the goods rose. Unfortunately, many of the jobs created by the outsiders were occupied by the outsiders themselves. Since the settlement could not support many native wage

earners, they had, of necessity, to continue their traditional trapping activities.

Recently the natives' economic life has been completely transformed by the security of the availability of employment or welfare payments in the settlement. Until a few decades ago, the trappers around Fort Chipewyan lived on their lines, visiting the settlement. During the 1960's the number of trapping cabins declined markedly, and centrifugal movements to trapping areas were characteristic, rather than the previous centripetal movements to the settlement.

One of the hypotheses to be tested was that native trapping grounds would shift closer to the settlement in time, but this has only been partially demonstrated. On a large scale the process of convergence was evident, but on an individual basis, directional patterns in terms of physical distance are less clear. The more distant trappers have moved closer to the settlement through time. Those originally trapping closer to Fort Chipewyan have moved away from the environs of the settlement to more distant trapping areas, reflecting the intensity of trapping and overharvesting around the settlement.

Other economic activities which provide employment are commercial fishing, lumbering and mining-related activities. However, the natives exhibit the very low effective mobility which is characteristic of spatially restricted societies. Their employment has always been created by outsiders, often large companies. These outsiders have experience, management, equipment and capital backing for their operations, all of which the natives lack and so have been frustrated in their attempts to successfully set up similar activities.

It is evident that the other hypothesis to be tested in this thesis has been proven. Agents of the outside culture have indubitably accelerated

population movements, and thus prompted changes in land use and native activity. The natives have increasingly converged on Fort Chipewyan and chosen it as a place of permanent residence, largely through the stimulus of outsiders. Their economic activities have moved away from the traditional, and towards wage employment.

However, for every type of economic activity in which the natives have participated, it is the outsiders who have reaped the profits. This has led to the conclusion that for a viable economy to exist in Fort Chipewyan, the natives must have an enormously expanded ownership role in commercial enterprises. These enterprises should be as varied as possible to diversify the narrow economic base of the community. Government aid is required urgently, but with native participation in the decision-making process. Decisions made by outsiders have not always been in the natives' interest, and have induced a state of apathy amongst them with regard to their aspirations and means of achieving goals. Outsiders must help the natives now since in the past they have both encouraged and enabled the natives of Fort Chipewyan to change their way of life.

Although it is not the place of this thesis to speculate on the development of other communities, it appears that Fort Chipewyan is fairly representative of other isolated native settlements in Canada.[1] This is especially true with regard to demographic characteristics. Many economic problems are similar. The economic base of the settlements has largely been traditional subsistence activities and is inadequate to support the populations. Unemployment is a severe problem and dependence on welfare is heavy, yet the natives exhibit a lack of effective mobility which precludes their finding employment elsewhere.

Traditional economic activities have been centered around trapping, hunting and fishing. Bone shows that in northern Saskatchewan, village

life dominates the Chipewyans now. There, trapping has virtually disappeared, although a modern form of caribou hunting is still actively pursued by many natives.[2] Through the influence of outsiders, the natives of the Mackenzie Delta area have increasingly converged on the settlements as a place of residence and on the security of the delta as a place to trap.[3] Usher has pointed out for the Arctic Islands that trapping provides very little security, and is vulnerable due to price instability and can no longer be the sole basis of the economy.[4]

The process of attraction to the settlements has not been a simple one and has varied in intensity and in rapidity. The attraction of the land-based way of life has not yet disappeared, and many natives exhibit a dual allegiance to both town and bush. The degree to which this is demonstrated in communities other than Fort Chipewyan depends on many factors, including the previous traditional activities of the natives, the type and number of outsiders, and the length of time that they have been in contact with these agents of the external culture.

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